

A  
PLAIN ACCOUNT  
OF THE  
ORDINANCE of BAPTISM;  
IN WHICH

All the TEXTS of the NEW TESTAMENT,  
relating to it, are produced, and the  
whole DOCTRINE concerning it drawn  
from them alone:

IN  
A COURSE OF LETTERS  
TO THE RIGHT REVEREND  
**Dr. BENJAMIN HOADLEY,**  
LATE LORD BISHOP OF WINCHESTER.

Author of a PLAIN ACCOUNT of the  
LORD'S SUPPER.

---

By WILLIAM FOOT.



*Ye shall not add unto the word which I have com-  
manded you, neither shall you diminish from it.*

The THIRD EDITION, with the Author's last  
Corrections and Improvements;

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By JOSHUA TOULMIN, A.M.

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## P R E F A C E TO THIS EDITION.

THE following treatise took its rise, from the desire of a worthy friend of the author \*, who expressed to him, an earnest wish, to see the subject handled in a plain and concise manner; the argument brought into a short compass, and as free as possible, from those polemical forms, under which, it had been usually treated.

It first appeared in two distinct courses of Letters, one of which, was published in 1756, the other in 1758; a second edition of both, was printed in 1766, in the same form and manner as this, which is now offered to the public. In AMERICA, it has gone through several editions, and has had an extensive circulation.

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\* Revd. Josiah Thompson.

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Here at home it has been frequently referred to, in some late publications, on the subject, with an attention and respect, due to a work of lasting merit.

Soon after its first publication, one of the Critical Journals, bestowed on it this just encomium. “ This author writes “ with candour, and in a very sensible “ manner; there are no marks in his let- “ ters, of that intemperate heat, and vio- “ lent party spirit, with which the wri- “ ters in this controversy, have frequent- “ ly disgraced both themselves and their “ subject \*.”

A Prelate, of the present day, whose liberality of mind diffuses itself through all his writings, in a catalogue of authors, proper to form the library of a clergyman, has assigned to this piece, an honourable place in his list, by naming it with two capital works on the same question †.

\* Monthly Review, for October 1758. p. 144.

† See bishop Watson's valuable collection of Theological Tracts, p. 6.

It is entitled to this distinction in itself, and, it may be presumed, appeared so to the learned Prelate, on account of the principles, which are here applied to the institution of baptism. For *them*, the world hath been long indebted, to the well known Mr. JOHN HALES, of ETON. The very eminent Prelate, to whom the following *letters* are addressed, had enforced these principles, with respect to the nature and effects of the Lord's Supper. Very lately, they have been again applied to the same subject, with great judgment and precision, in an excellent treatise, written by a judicious and learned divine \*.

The Tract, now again laid before the public, is the only one, in which the institution of *Baptism* has been treated upon these principles. It has been said, that the great man, who founded on them his *plain account of the Sacrament of the Lord's*

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\* An attempt to ascertain and illustrate the authority, the nature and design, of the institution of christianity; by William Bell, D. D.

*Supper*, did discuss the subject of baptism, on the same grounds. But to whatever cause it be owing, the friends of truth and free enquiry, have yet to regret, that the result of his disquisitions has not been published.

The principles themselves are excellent for clearness and precision—for the force and evidence, which they carry along with them—and for the simplicity of application: They have, indeed, been reproached as principles, “ which have been uniformly adopted, by all *Socinian* writers; “ and as producing, when en-“ forced with respect to the Lord’s Sup-“ per, the favourite system of those here-“ tics, who utterly explode the other “ christian sacrament.” These reflecti-“ ons might be worthy of regard, if the question *were*, or *ought* to be, not whe-“ ther the principles be *true*, but who em-“ braces them, and acts upon them? The great ground of the disapprobation, with which they have been by some rejected, appears to be this: “ That they are ut-“ terly inconsistent with the public doc-

“trine and services, of the established church\*.” But until the Church of England can establish claims to infallibility, which the Church of *Rome only*, hath the arrogance explicitly to avow, this objection can have little weight with the lovers of truth and the gospel. It ought to have no weight. In every case of *christian* faith or practice, the dernier resort, in order to ascertain the mind and will of Christ, must be, not to the doctrines or services of any church, but to the declarations of Christ himself.

The Editor, therefore, cannot but express his surprise, that the author of these Letters, is the only writer who has applied the principles, adopted by bishop HOADLEY, in his *Plain Account of the Lord's Supper*, to the institution of *baptism*. It has indeed, been held out to the considerer of the judicious and ingenious writer who hath followed bishop HOADLEY; that if he would try to explain the

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\* Dr. Bagot's (now bishop of Norwich) Letter to the Revd. William Bell, D.D. p. 5, 14.

sacrament of baptism, upon the same principles, by which he has explained the Lord's Supper, he will find himself, in the end, at no great distance from the Heretics, who explode this institution. " You may retain the form, perhaps, (says " his reverend monitor) but must give up " the substance, the real significance and " benefit of it.\*"

Whom can such apprehensions, and such warnings, deter from pursuing their enquiries, and from bringing established forms, or prevailing opinions, to the standard? Only those, who either distrust their principles,—or have another interest to support, besides pure truth,

A peculiar difficulty lies in the way of freely discussing the subject of baptism, after this manner: A person, who sustains the character of an officiating minister, in any christian society, besides that of the established Church, may alter his sentiments concerning the Lord's supper, its nature and effects, and yet

\* Dr. Bagot's letter, p. 15.

conduct the devotional services of that institution, in a manner, which will not apparently militate against any commonly received notions.

But the case, with respect to baptism, is different: for though all, who love and seek truth, after a candid attention, may not be affected in the same manner, by the same train of reasoning, yet should the result of applying to that ordinance, the principles to which we now refer, be a conviction of the justness of the conclusions drawn from them, in the ensuing treatise,—the *practice* must be materially affected. A rite, generally received, must be exploded; great difficulties, perhaps distress, may be the consequences of a change of sentiments, that will have so visible and marked an influence, upon the future conduct. Every mind has not resolution to meet the prospect. To every mind, questions concerning positive institutions, do not appear so important, as to justify such a risk. But TRUTH is TRUTH, in the least as well as the greatest points. It is our duty to follow it,

## ¶ P R E F A C E.

leaving the event, to the God of truth, who will not forsake his faithful servants. The Editor felt these difficulties; though, through a generous friend, and a kind providence, not the distressing consequences of being deeply affected with that view of the subject, which the following pages exhibit. To his mind, the argument appeared in that clear and proper light, it left those impressions, that he could no longer reconcile it to himself to continue a practice, which very frequently occurs, in the course of ministerial duty.

After more than twenty years; after having, during that period, repeatedly directed his thoughts to the question, he has not seen reason to retract the judgment which the perusal of these Letters, led him to form:—And though it has not been without its inconveniences and discouragements, in a worldly view; he retains, he hopes, too grateful a sense of the goodness of providence, to repent of it.

From a conviction of the justness and excellence of the principles on which this piece proceeds, and from an apprehension, that when many occasional pieces, in a controversial strain, shall be forgotten, these Letters will be a standard book on the subject; he accedes with great pleasure, to the wishes of the author's friends, to bring forward a *new edition* of them, corrected from a copy which the author had revised.

The Editor, cannot deny himself the gratification which this opportunity affords him, of expressing his esteem and friendship for the author, with whom he had the happiness of a personal acquaintance.

The moderation, candour and simplicity, so apparent in these Letters, were eminently exemplified in the mind and manners of the writer. Piety, integrity and benevolence, were conspicuous, throughout his whole character and temper. That no worldly interest, or temptations of any

kind, ever, in a single instance, overpowered these virtues, is not the partial eulogium of a friend.—The Editor, is well assured, that all who knew Mr. Foot, will unite their suffrages, to the uniform excellence of his character.

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An Extract from a Letter of the  
Rev. JOSIAH THOMPSON, to  
the EDITOR, dated October  
16, 1786.

DEAR SIR,

YOUR favour of the 30th of September, together with the Preface to the intended Edition of Mr Foot's Letters, gave me peculiar satisfaction and pleasure. An intimacy with the worthy author, between thirty and forty years, enables me to bear testimony to every tittle you have said of him at the conclusion of the preface. The longer I knew him, the more I venerated, esteemed and loved him. The simplicity of his manners, the sweetness of his temper, his unconfined benevolence and unaffected piety, never failed

to fill all that conversed with him (who were capable of feeling) with the highest admiration of his character. And to have my name mentioned in any connexion with Mr Foot's, is an honour I set much greater value upon, than to be known to those, whose rank and titles make a more splendid figure in the world.

The particular circumstance which gave occasion to the publication of this treatise, was this: A gentleman, who for some years, had his doubts upon the subject of Baptism, being disgusted with the personalities, and other matters foreign to the point, in writings on both sides of the controversy, applied to me to put into his hands a plain and concise view of the argument. I was both ashamed and concerned to be obliged to tell him, that among the numberless tracts that had

been published on the question, I knew not one that would answer his views and wishes; and therefore advised him to form his own judgment from the authentic accounts the New Testament Writers furnished him with of this institution. He did so; and some time after, at his desire, I baptized him.

This put me on thinking that a little treatise on baptism, in the manner of Hoadley's Plain Account of the Lord's Supper, might be of use, and read by persons who had neither time nor patience to enter into the controversy, as it has been generally managed: and as I knew no one so well qualified in every respect as my friend Mr Foot, to undertake this business, I was pretty earnest with him; assigning the above reason for my request; and which he soon after obligingly complied with.

I then thought, and have ever since,  
been of your opinion, " That when ma-  
" ny occasional pieces, in a controversial  
" strain, shall be forgotten, these Letters  
" will be a standard book on the subject."

## LETTER I.

MY LORD,

WHEN I read your Lordship's *Plain Account of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*, many years ago, I could not help wishing to see an account of the other Sacrament drawn up in the same manner. You have certainly laid the true foundation of our enquiries into the *positive institutions* of Christianity. You draw your account of a *Christian* rite from the *Christian* records; and your assertion is undoubtedly true; "that all *positive duties*, " or duties made such by institution alone, " depend entirely upon the will and de- " claration of the person who institutes " or ordains them, with respect to the " real *design* and *end* of them; and, " consequently, to the due *manner* of " performing them."

Since no one has yet executed what has been so long wished for, I shall make an

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humble attempt to follow your Lordship's example with respect to the sacrament of *baptism*. I shall lay together all the texts in the *New Testament* relating to it, and from them alone draw the whole doctrine about it. And it is with great propriety I address my enquiries on this subject to your Lordship, because if I find the truth, I am indebted to *you* for pointing out the shortest and plainest way to it.

I beg leave to begin with some of your propositions, making the necessary alteration from the one sacrament to the other.

I. The receiving of *baptism* is not a duty of itself; or a duty apparent to us from the nature of things; but a duty made such to *Christians*, by the positive institution of *Jesus Christ*.

II. All *positive duties*, or duties made such by *institution* alone, depend entirely upon the will and declaration of the person who institutes or ordains them, with respect to the real *design* and *end* of them;

and, consequently, to the due *manner* of performing them.

III. It is plain, therefore, that the *nature*, the *design*, and the due *manner* of receiving *baptism*, must of necessity depend upon what *Jesus Christ*, who instituted it, hath declared about it.

IV. It cannot be doubted that he himself sufficiently declared to his first and immediate followers, the whole of what he designed should be understood by it, or implied in it.

V. It is of small importance, therefore, to *Christians*, to know what the many writers upon this subject, since the time of the Evangelists and Apostles, have affirmed; much less can it be the duty of *Christians* to be guided by what any persons, by their own authority, or from their own imaginations, may teach concerning this duty.

VI. The passages in the *New Testament*, which relate to this duty, and they alone, are the original accounts of the *nature* and *end* of this institution, and the only authentic declarations, upon which we of later ages can safely depend, being written by the immediate followers of our Lord; those who were witnesses themselves of the *institution*, or were instructed by those who were so, and join with them in delivering down one and the same account of this religious duty.

Your Lordship will permit me to mention an observation of yours, most worthy to be remembered, under this last proposition, *viz.* "A *very few* years make a "great alteration in mens notions and "language about such points of religion. "And the distance of *many* years makes "a still greater alteration, whilst men of "various opinions, and strong imagina- "tions, are continually going on to com- "ment and enlarge upon such subjects, "the *New Testament* therefore, in this "case, is *alone* to be depended on: from

“ which we ought, with the greatest care  
“ and honesty, to take *all* our notions of  
“ this duty.”

Your Lordship will be pleased with the following observation of Archbishop *Tillotson*, much to the same purpose. “ In process of time, the best institutions are apt to *decline*, and by insensible degrees to swerve and depart from the perfection of their first state: and therefore it is a good rule, to preserve things from corruption and degeneracy, often to look back to *the first institution*, and by that to correct those imperfections and errors which will almost unavoidably creep in with time.” Vol. 2. page 170, edit. fol.

I shall now offer to your Lordship’s perusal every text of the *New Testament*, that speaks of the sacrament of *Baptism*. It will be proper first to set down those which belong to *John’s baptism*.

*Passages of Scripture concerning JOHN's baptism.*

1. *Mat. iii. 5, 6, 7.* Then went out to him *Jerusalem* and all *Judea*, and all the region round about *Jordan*, and were *baptized* of him in *Jordan*, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the *Pharisees* and *Sadduces* come to his *baptism*, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, &c.

2. *Verse 11.* I indeed *baptize* you with water unto repentance, &c.

3. *Verse 13, 14, 15, 16.* Then cometh *Jesus* from *Galilee* to *Jordan* unto *John*, to be *baptized* of him. But *John* forbade him saying, I have need to be *baptized* of thee, and comest thou to me? And *Jesus* answering said unto him, suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And *Jesus* when he was *baptized* went up straightway out of the water.

4. *Mat. xxi. 25, 26, 27.* The *baptism* of *John*, whence was it? From heaven,

or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, if we shall say from heaven, he will say unto us, why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say of men, we fear the people, for all hold *John* as a prophet. And they answered *Jesus*, and said, We cannot tell, &c.

5. *Mark* i. 4, 5. *John* did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And there went out unto him all the land of *Judea*, and they of *Jerusalem*, and were all baptized of him in the river *Jordan* confessing their sins.

6.—*Ver. 8, 9, 10.* I indeed have baptized you with water.—And it came to pass in those days, that *Jesus* came from *Nazareth* of *Galilee*, and was baptized of *John* in *Jordan*, and straightway coming up out of the water, &c.

7. *Mark* xi. 30. The baptism of *John*, was it from heaven or of men?

8. *Luke* iii. 3. And he came into all the country about *Jordan*, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

9.—Ver, 7, 8. Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be *baptized* of him, O generation of vipers—bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.

10.—Ver. 12. Then came also Publicans to be *baptized*.

11.—Ver. 16. I indeed *baptize* you with water.

12.—Ver. 21. Now when all the people were *baptized*, it came to pass that Jesus also being *baptized*, &c.

13. *Luke* vii. 29, 30. And all the people that heard him, and the Publicans justified God, being *baptized* with the *baptism* of John. But the Pharisees and Lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not *baptized* of him.

14. *Luke* xx. 4. The *baptism* of John, was it from heaven or of men?

15. *John* i. 25, 26. Why *baptizest* thou then, if thou be not that *Christ* nor *Elias*, neither that prophet? *John* answered them saying, I *baptize* with water.

16.—Ver. 28. Beyond *Jordan* where *John* was *baptizing*.

17.—Ver. 31. That he should be made manifest to *Israel*: therefore am I come *baptizing* with water.

18.—Ver. 33. He that sent me to *baptize* with water.

19. *John* iii. 23. And *John* also was *baptizing* in *Enon*, near to *Salim*, because there was much water there; and they came and were *baptized*. Note, some understand

[ Verse 25. of *baptism*, then there arose a question—about *purifying*. ]

20. *John* iv. 1. The Pharisees had heard that *Jesus* made and *baptized* more disciples than *John*.

21. *John x. 40.* Beyond *Jordan*, into the place where *John* at first *baptized*.

22. *Acts i. 5.* *John* truly *baptized* with water.

23.—Ver. 22. Beginning from the *baptism* of *John*.

24. *Acts x. 37.* After the *baptism* which *John* preached.

25.—xi. 16. *John* indeed *baptized* with water.

26.—xiii. 24. When *John* had first preached before his coming, the *baptism* of repentance to all the people.

27.—xviii. 25. He [*Apollos*] spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the *baptism* of *John*.

28.—xix. 3, 4. Unto what then were ye *baptized*? And they said unto *John's baptism*. Then said *Paul*, *John* verily *baptized* with the *baptism* of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should

Believe on him which should come after him, that is, on *Christ Jesus*.

*Passages of Scripture concerning CHRIST's Baptism.*

1. *Matt.* xxviii. 19. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, *baptizing* them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

2. *Mark* xvi. 15, 16. And he said unto them, go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature ; he that believeth and is *baptized* shall be saved.

3. *John* iii. 5. Except a man be *born of water* and of the spirit, &c.

4.—*Ver. 22.* After these things came *Jesus* and his disciples into the land of *Judea* ; and there he tarried with them and *baptized*.

5.—*Ver. 26.* Behold the same *baptizeth*, and all men come to him.

6.—iv. 1, 2. When therefore the Lord knew how the pharisees had heard, that *Jesus* made and *baptized* more disciples than *John* (though *Jesus* himself *baptized* not, but his disciples.)

7. *Act*s ii. 38. Then *Peter* said unto them, Repent, and be *baptized* every one of you in the name of *Jesus Christ*, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

8. *Act*s ii. 41. Then they that gladly received his word were *baptized*.

9.—viii. 12, 13. But when they believed *Philip*, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of *Jesus Christ*, they were *baptized*, both men and women. Then *Simon* himself believed also; and when he was *baptized*, &c.

10.—Ver. 16 Only they were *baptized* in the name of the Lord *Jesus*.

11.—Ver. 36, 37, 38, 39. And as they went on their way they came unto a cer-

tain water. And the Eunuch said, See, here is water, what doth hinder me to be *baptized*? And *Philip* said, if thou believest with all thine heart thou may'st. And he answered and said, I believe that *Jesus Christ* is the Son of God, And he commanded the chariot to stand still. And they went down both into the water, both *Philip* and the Eunuch, and he *baptized* him. And when they were come up out of the water, &c.

12.—ix. 18. And [Saul] arose and was *baptized*.

13.—x. 47, 48. Can any man forbid water, that these should not be *baptized*, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be *baptized* in the name of the Lord.

14. *Acts* xvi. 15. And when she [Lydia] was *baptized* and her household.

15.—Ver. 33. And was *baptized*, he [the jaylor] and all his straightway.

16.—xviii. 8. And many of the *Corinthians* hearing, believed, and were *baptized*.

17.—xix. 5. When they heard this, they [who had before been baptized into *John's baptism*] were *baptized* in the name of the *Lord Jesus*.

18.—xxii. 16. And now why tarriest thou? Arise and be *baptized*, and *wash away* thy sins, calling on the name of the *Lord*.

19. *Romans* vi. 3, 4. Know ye not, that so many of us as were *baptized* into *Christ Jesus*, were *baptized* into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by *baptism* into death, that like as *Christ* was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

20. 1 *Corinthians* i. 13, 14, 15, 16, 17. Were ye *baptized* in the name of *Paul*? I thank God that I *baptized* none of you, but *Crispus* and *Gaius*: lest any should say,

that I had *baptized* in mine own name. And I *baptized* also the household of Stephanus: besides, I know not whether I *baptized* any other; for *Christ* sent me not to *baptize*, but to preach the gospel.

21. *1 Cor. vi. 11.* But ye are *washed*.

22. *Ibid. xii. 13.* For by one spirit are we all *baptized* into one body. [Note, this may rather be understood of the baptism of the *Holy Ghost*.]

23. *1 Cor. xv. 29.* Else what shall they do that are *baptized* for the dead. [That is, I think, by baptism come *into the place* of those Christians who are dead, who are their *successors* in their profession, and in their sufferings.]

24. *Gal. iii. 27.* For as many of you as have been *baptized* into *Christ*, have put on *Christ*.

25. *Ephes. iv. 5.* One *baptism*.

26. *Ibid. v. 26.* That he might sanctify and cleanse it, with the *washing of water*, by the word.

27. *Coloff.* ii. 12. Buried with him in *baptism*, wherein also you are risen with him.

28. *Tit.* iii. 5. According to his mercy he saved us, by the *washing* of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.

29. *Hebrews* vi. 2. The doctrine of *baptisms*. [Note, it is not certain, this has any reference to Christian baptism. See *Peirce in loc.*.]

30.—x. 22. Our bodies *washed* with pure water.

31. *1 Peter* iii. 21. The like figure whereunto, even *baptism*, doth also now save us (not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God) by the resurrection, &c.

Besides the foregoing, there are these following texts, which some good expositors understand of *baptism*.

*2 Peter* i. 9. And hath forgotten, that he was *purged* from his old sins.

*Heb. vi. 4.* Those who were once enlightened. *Heb. x. 32.* In which after ye were illuminated.

These are, I believe, all the texts in the *New Testament*, that relate either to the baptism of *John*, or of Christ.

The observations I have to offer from them, shall be reserved to some following letters.

*I am, my Lord,*

*Your Lordship's most obedient  
humble Servant.*

## LETTER II.

MY LORD,

THERE are some opinions in Theology so entirely *speculative*, that a man, who has a just value for time, would scarcely think himself justified in spending a day to examine which are right, and which wrong. The subject before us is *not* of this sort: it is entirely of a *practical* nature, and comes into practice daily. It therefore becomes us to look well to our *rule*, to what our *Saviour* and his *immediate followers* have declared about this duty; “because (as your Lordship well observes) “we can have *no other* direction in this “sort of duties, unless we will have re-“course to *mere invention*, which makes “*them our own* institutions, and not the “institutions of *those* who first appointed “*them.*” *Plain Acc.* p. 3.

In the foregoing letter, it appears, there are about *threescore* texts of scripture, which speak of the institution of *baptism*; partly

perceive as practised by *John*, and partly by the Apostles and Disciples of *Jesus Christ*: Passages abundantly sufficient to inform us of the *nature*, *design*, and *manner* of this sacrament.

I beg leave first to lay before your Lordship an enquiry into the *manner* of this rite, or what the *New Testament* means by the action of *baptizing*.

The writers of the *New Testament* make use of two words, *βαπτιζω* and *λεω* which lead us to the precise meaning of baptism, the latter of which is almost the constant word of the Septuagint in those *very numerous* places where *bathing*, or washing the *whole body* is commanded, in contradistinction to every other practice of washing the hands or feet, or sprinkling or washing of cloaths. *Λεσιται υδατι*, occurs no less than eleven times in one chapter, where bathing the body is appointed on sundry occasions, as a *distinct rite* from washing the hands, or garments, &c.

The Evangelists and Apostles did, as Dr. *Prideaux*, the most learned *Joseph Mede*, and others observe, \* all quote from the *Greek* of the *Old Testament*. *Prid. Connect.* vol. II. page 47, edit. 3. *Mede's Works*, p. 625. Since therefore  $\lambda\alpha\sigma\tau\alpha\iota\upsilon\delta\alpha\tau\iota$ , used times without number in the *Old Testament*, never imports less than *bathing*, or *washing* the *whole body*; it follows, *baptism* means the same, when it is expressed by *our body washed with pure water*. [Gr.  $\lambda\alpha\lambda\mu\mu\epsilon\nu\sigma\tau\alpha\iota\sigma\mu\mu\alpha\iota\upsilon\delta\alpha\tau\iota\kappa\alpha\theta\alpha\rho\mu\mu\alpha$  *Heb.* x. 22.

We have a remarkable passage in the case of *Naaman* the *Syrian's* cure of a le-

\* " We must explain the phraseology of the Apostles  
" by that of *Moses*, and the prophets. The *Greek* of  
" the *Septuagint* version, which was commonly read by  
" those  *Jews* who lived in foreign countries, and spoke  
" the *Greek* language, will serve to shew us, what words  
" in the *Hebrew* correspond to the *Greek* words, which  
" the Apostles used. For the Apostles used the *Helleni-  
" sic Greek*, into which the *Old Testament* is translated,  
" and which the  *Jews* in their dispersions commonly  
" read." *Taylor's Key to the Apostolic Writings*, p.  
225. edit. 2.

prosy. *Elisa* commands him to go and *wash* [λύσαι] in *Jordan* seven times; the very practice appointed for cleansing a leper, and which, without controversy, means *washing the whole body*, in distinction from *all other rites of sprinkling, pouring, &c.* What is done by the leper in consequence of this command? He went down and *dipped* himself [εἰσπνισσάτο] seven times in *Jordan*, according to the saying of the man of *God*. 2 *Kings* v. 14. What was the saying of the man of *God*? *Wash* [bathe] seven times. He did as he was commanded, *viz.* he *dipped* himself seven times; the strict translation of the *Hebrew* word [טָבֵל;] and so rendered in every place, without one exception, where the word occurs in the *Old Testament*. From which word the *Jews* call *John* the *Baptist* טָבֵלן the *dipper*. *Grot.* in *Mat.* xiv. 2.

It falls out, my Lord, very remarkably, that the *only two* words which the *Greek* of the *Old Testament* makes use of to express the rite of *washing the whole body*, as distinct from *all other rites of sprinkling*,

pouring, washing the hands and feet; both these words, and *only these*, are made use of in the *Greek* of the *New Testament*, to *specify* and determine, with *precision*, the action of *baptizing*. So that if the Evangelists and Apostles had, on purpose, sought words which should *precisely express* *a bathing the whole body*, and *prevent* all inquiry whether they meant nothing *short of* it; they *could not possibly* have met with two fitter words than  $\lambda\epsilon\omega^*$  and  $\beta\alpha\pi\tau\iota\zeta\omega$ .  $\beta\alpha\pi\tau\iota\zeta\omega$  would hardly have done so well, because, borrowing their *Greek* from the *Old Testament*, this last word is never used there to express the rite of washing or dipping a person's whole body. Let any learned person try to find out two *better* words, if he had a mind to express *a washing of the whole body*. The question is not, whether *sprinkling* was a ceremony of purification. No one doubts it: but whether *sprinkling* is the rite of *baptism*? Whoever is acquainted with the *Greek* of the *Old Testament*, whence, as has been observed, the Evangelists and Apostles took their language, may

\* The *New Testament* has also its compound  $\alpha\pi\omega\lambda\epsilon\omega$ , *Act*s xxii. 16. 3 Cor. vi. 11.

perceive that *sprinkling* and *baptism* are as distinct rites, as are the actions of *baptism*, and the priest's putting *oil* upon the tip of the right ear, and the thumb of the right hand, and upon the great toe of the right foot. Both which ceremonies of *baptism*, and such application of *oil*, were used in cleansing a leper. *Lev. xiv.*

And here your Lordship will permit me to observe, we run into a *great mistake* and *confusion* of language, when we talk of *sprinkling* and *immersion* as different *modes* of the *same thing*. *Modern custom* has reconciled us to this abuse of language ; so that we do not stumble at the *inconsistency*, when we call *sprinkling baptism*. But he that shall confine himself unto the ideas conveyed by *scripture-language*, will perceive that to call *sprinkling a mode of baptism*, is to call *sprinkling a mode of bathing* or of *washing the body in water*. 'Tis to confound two rites entirely as distinct, as were *washing the body*, and *shaving off the hair*, in the purification of a leper. Accordingly the Christian church, the *whole* Chris-

tian church, for thirteen hundred years successively from the time of the Apostles, understood by baptism *immersion*, and so practised; *sprinkling* being only permitted upon extraordinary occasions. *Vid. Whitby's note on Romans vi. 4.*

Your Lordship [*Plain Account*, page 150.] observing, at least quoting Dr. *Clarke* as observing, that Baptism is styled a being *buried with Christ and rising with him again*, remarks, “this expression made use of by St. *Paul*, with relation to *baptism*, is taken from the custom of *immersion* in the first days, and from that particular manner of *baptizing* proselytes, “by which they were first *covered* with “water, and in a state as it were of *death* “and *inactivity*, and then arose out of it “into a sort of new state of life and action. “And if *baptism* had been then performed, “as it is now amongst us, we should never have so much as heard of this form of “expression, of *dying and arising again*, in “this rite.”

By this your Lordship authorizes me to say, that in the *first days*, Baptism was not performed as it is now amongst us. No, my Lord, it is now amongst us changed into *another thing*: not into a *different mode* of the *same rite*; but into *another and different rite*. The *first days* say, that *baptism* was *immersion*. “ And whatever was truly necessary at first towards a right understanding of this *institution*, was without doubt contained in the *first and earliest accounts*; otherwise it must be said, that the *very first Christians*, who were called upon to perform this duty, and who actually *did perform it very frequently*, were not fully instructed by the Apostles in it.” *Plain Account*, page 7.

According to the *first and earliest accounts*, that is, according to “ the *only authentic* declarations, upon which we of latter ages can *safely depend*;” [Plain Account, page 7.] When an *Apostle* said, *I baptize thee in the name of the*

Father, &c. He meant, I *immerge*, *plunge*, *dip*\* thee in the name, &c. This your Lordship knows was the custom in the *first days*: so that when our Lord and Saviour sent forth the Apostles with this commission, Go teach all nations, *baptizing* them: *He* meant *immerge* them. And so the *Apostles* actually understood him, for so they *practised*. And “if Baptism had “been then performed as it is now amongst “us, we should never have so much as “heard of this form of expression, of *dying* “and *arising again* in this rite.” But “the distance of *many* years has made a “great alteration in mens language about “this *point*,” joining together in one word

\* The ancient British words, by which the ordinance of Baptism was expressed, signified *plunging* or *dipping*. *Wickliff* rendered *βαπτιζω* *Mat.iii. 6. Weren Waschen*. The words *Baptism* and *Baptize*, were used in our present version in obedience to the Mandate of *JAMES I.* who deemed them *sacred*. And the Translators boasted their having *avoided the scruposity of the Puritans*, who left the old Ecclesiastical words, and betook them to other, as when they put *washing* for *Baptism*. *RICHARDSON's History of ANTICHRIST*, p. 88, 89, the note, and p. 98, 99: And *Bp NEWCOME on the MINOR PROPHETS*, *Preface*, p. 35. EDITOR.

[baptize] *two, several, distinct* rites, which the Almighty has *always* put asunder. And from whom came the *established* change of the scriptural *baptism* into *another quite different* institution? Let the learned Dr. *Wall* answer, “ it is a rule that does not fail in any particular that I know of, “ *viz.* All the nations that do now, or formerly did, submit to the authority of “ the *bishop of Rome*, do ordinarily baptize “ their infants by *pouring* or *sprinkling*.

“ But *all other* Christians in the world, “ who *never* owned the *Pope's* usurped power, do, and ever did, *dip* their infants in the ordinary use. And if we “ take the division of the world from the “ three main parts of it, *all* the Christians “ in *Asia*, all in *Africa*, and about *one third* part of *Europe*, are of the last sort, “ [viz. who understand by baptism *immersion*, and so practise] In which third “ part of *Europe*, are comprehended the “ Christians of *Græcia, Thracia, Servia, Bulgaria, Walachia, Moldavia, Russia, &c.* and even the *Muscovites*, who, if

“ *coldness* of the country will excuse, might  
 “ plead for a dispensation with the most  
 “ reason of any.” *Hist. Inf. Baptism*,  
 part 2. page 309, &c. edit, 1.

See here, my Lord, how the *immersion* of the *first days* came to be cast out, and set aside. The church of *Rome*, the *mother of abominations, who thinketh to change times and laws*, *Rev. xvii. Dan. vii.* She first set aside the common use of *dipping*; and *her* example is followed by those protestant churches that were once under her *tyranny and corruption*; but by *none else*.

*I am,*

*my Lord, &c.*

## LETTER III.

MY LORD,

**I**N order to settle right notions on the present subject, it cannot be too carefully attended to, that, in *holy scripture*, sprinkling, pouring, and washing or bathing the body, are always *distinct* rites, *never* confounded, or substituted one for another. If therefore it shall appear, that the *baptism* of scripture is nothing more or less than *washing the body*; not the hands, or feet, or face, or any other particular part; much less *sprinkling*, which the scripture *never* considers as any washing at all, but a rite intirely *distinct* from every kind of *lotion*; if, I say, *baptism* be *washing the body*, it will deserve and demand the *very serious consideration* of every one who is concerned to observe this as an *institution of God*, whether, and upon what principle, we may lay aside the *one only baptism* of scripture, and put *another thing* in the room of it?

And further, with respect to the practice of *modern* times (for sprinkling is but of late date in *Engalnd*)\* it may deserve also to be considered, whether there be in any part of the Bible any such religious ceremony, as *sprinkling water* on the face? If my reading does not deceive me, there does not appear in all the five books of *Moses* any rite of sprinkling *mere* water. There was a sprinkling of water mixed with blood, and of water mixed with the ashes of an heifer; but I think no such thing as sprinkling *simple* water. It is said indeed, *Ezek. xxxvi. 25.* Then will I *sprinkle clean water* upon you, and ye shall be clean; alluding, it is likely, to some watery purification in the law of *Moses*: but I have not been able to find any expositor, who could point out any

\* The practice of *dipping* infants in baptism, was not left off here in *England*, much above an hundred years ago. The old editions of the Common Prayer prescribe *only* dipping, and in the present edition, *dipping* is still required, and *pouring* water on the child only permitted in case the sureties certify that the child is weak. *HALLET's Notes and Discourses*, Vol. 3. p. 356, printed 1736. Editor.

ceremony of *unmixed* water, to which this refers. The only probable account I can find is, it refers to the *water of separation*, *Numb. xix.* called also *water*, simply; but this was really a *composition* of various ingredients, *viz.* the ashes of a burnt heifer, cedar-wood, and hyssop, and scarlet, all *mixed* with the water. And in this case the unclean person was not only to be *sprinkled* with this *mixture* two several days, but, moreover, there was *another* quite distinct rite to be performed, even a *baptism*, *verse 19.* And the clean person shall *sprinkle* [the water of separation] upon the unclean, on the third day, and on the seventh day. And on the seventh day he shall purify himself, and wash his cloaths, and *bathe himself in water*. *Twice sprinkled*, my Lord, and after that *once baptized*.

*Washing the hands* was a religious ceremony of divine appointment; as also *washing the feet*. If then a clergyman should wash only the *hands*, or *feet* of the person to be *baptized*, and justify his practice by

this text, *John xiii. 10. Jesus saith to him, he that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.* I submit it to your Lordship's consideration, whether a minister has not as much [or more] scriptural authority to practise thus, and solemnly use the name of the *holy Trinity* on this occasion, and call it *baptism*, as he has to *sprinkle the face*, or, as the custom is in *Switzerland*, to pour water on the *back part of the head*,\* and call it *baptism*. All men, I doubt not, would cry out against this clergyman, as a *corrupter* of the sacrament of baptism. But why? Not because it is further removed from the *scripture account* of baptism, [*viz.* *a washing the body with pure water*] than our present practice, but because it is not *customary*.

I now beg leave to lay before your Lordship those passages on *baptism*, the *circumstances* of which assist in determining the *due manner* of administering this

\* *Bishop Burnet's 2d Letter of his Travels.*

institution ; and, if I introduce the remarks of learned men on some of these passages ; I do it, not as if by their authority, be they ever so learned or numerous, the point in question is to be decided ; but, on this principle, *viz.* that it may fairly be presumed, a judicious and learned writer will not, *against* his own practice, acknowledge more, than what he feels himself *constrained* to grant, by the overbearing force and evidence of truth.

*Mat. iii. 5, 6.* Then went out to him *Jerusalem*, and all *Judea*, and all the region round about *Jordan*, and were baptized of him in *JORDAN*.

Verse 16. And *Jesus* when he was baptized went up straightway *out of* the water.

*Mark i. 5.* Were all baptized of him in the river of *Jordan*.

Verse 9, 10. *Jesus* was baptized in *JORDAN* : and straightway *coming up out* of the water.

*John iii. 23. John was baptizing in Enon, because there was much water there\*.*

*Acts viii. 38, 39. They went down both into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water.*

*Rom. vi. 4 Buried with him by baptism.*

\* In the Greek, *υδατα* *ωλλα*, many waters, which some, either not knowing, or not attending to the Hebrew idiom, have fancied does not oblige us to understand of much or a large quantity of water. Whereas *υδατα* *ωλλα* is only the Hebrewism סים דביס. Now the singular number of this Hebrew substantive being not used, therefore the Greek version is sometimes *υδωρ* water, sometimes *υδατα* waters, though the Hebrew stands always the same. An example or two will suffice, instead of great numbers which might easily be produced. *Ezek. xii. 2.* When I shall bring up the deep upon thee, and great waters. [Greek *υδωρ* *ωλν*,] shall cover thee. *Psalm lxxvii. 19.* Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters [Greek *υδασι* *ωλλοις*.] So that it is quite indifferent, whether you express much water by *υδωρ* *ωλν*, or *υδατα* *ωλλα*. So the same river, in the same chapter, is *υδωρ*, water, and *υδατα*, waters, *Josb. iii.*

**1 Cor. vi. 11.** Ye are washed [ *απελευθερωθείς*. ] Note, λεω is the word constantly used [except once *βαπτιζω*] in those very numerous places of the *Old Testament*, where *bathing the person* is commanded, as a *distinct* rite from all others of sprinkling, pouring, &c.

**Ephes. v. 26.** That he might cleanse it [the church] with the *washing* of water [ *τῷ λευτρῷ* ]\*

**Coloff. ii. 12.** Buried with him in baptism, wherein also you are *risen* with him.

**Heb. x. 22.** Our bodies *washed* with pure water. [ *λελευμένοις* ].

Every circumstance, of chusing a *river* to baptize in, of going *down into the wa-*

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\* The Author in his corrected copy has here referred to Xenophon de Cyri Institutione cura Hutchinson. p. 417. 8vo. Τινὲς δὲ οἱ εδαμενοι αιθρωποι ευχειρωτεροι εισιν η εν σιτοις κ; ποιοις κ; λειρω κ; κοιτη, κ; υπνω, εσκοπει τινας ανεντειλοις περιταυτον πιγοτατους ξοι. Editor.

ter, and coming up out of the water, both the *baptizer* and the *baptized*; and the allusions to a *burial* and *rising again*; and of singling out a place proper for baptism, for this only reason, *because there was much water there*: all these circumstances are quite proper and natural to the custom of *immersion*. But it is hard to account for the mentioning or pertinence of them upon any other interpretation of baptism.

According to the custom of our day, my Lord, a single basin of water will suffice for a great multitude. And if the institution may be satisfied this way, to what purpose were the multitudes obliged to leave their cities and towns for the sake of coming at a *river*? What reason is there in chusing a place *because there is much water*, if much water were *not necessary*? There is not a town or village, but would equally well have served for the place of *baptizing*, according to *modern custom*.

The *Greek church* observes, on *Jesus* coming up out of the water of *Jordan* af-

ter his baptism, *Mat. iii. 16.* that "he  
 " who *ascended* out of the water must  
 " first *descend* down into it. Baptism  
 " therefore is to be performed, *not by*  
 " *sprinkling but by washing the body*" And  
 indeed, says Dr. *Whitby* in *loc.* " it can  
 " only be from ignorance of the Jewish  
 " rites in baptism, that this is *questioned* ;  
 " for they, to the due performance of this  
 " rite, so superstitiously required *the im-*  
 " *ersion of the whole body*, that if any dirt  
 " hindered the water from coming to any  
 " part of it, the baptism was not right ;  
 " and if one held the baptized person by  
 " the arm when he was let down into the  
 " water, another must after dip him,  
 " holding him by the other arm that was  
 " washed before, because his hand would  
 " not suffer the water to come to his  
 " whole body."

Mr. *Baxter*, in his Paraphrase on the  
*New Testament*, [one of the last books he  
 published, in a good *old age*, when the  
 heat of controversy may be supposed well  
 over] observes on *Mat. iii. 6.* " We  
 " grant that baptism then was by *washing*

“ *the whole body*; and did not the difference of our *cold* country, as to that hot one, teach us to remember [I will have mercy and not sacrifice] *it should be so here.*”

The same writer thus paraphrases *Rom.* vi. 4. “ Therefore in our baptism we are *dipped under the water*, as signifying we are *dead and buried to sin.*” Again “ *Coloff.* ii. 12. is thus paraphrased by him, “ They [your lusts] are dead and buried with him, for so your *baptism* signifieth, in which you are *put under the water*, to signify and profess that your old man is dead and buried, &c.” Once more, on *1 Peter* iii. 21. “ When we are raised to holiness by his Spirit, as we rise out of the water in baptism, &c.

But why, it may be asked, so particular with Mr. *Baxter*? For the sake, my Lord, of the *Pædobaptist dissenters*, if these letters should fall into their hands, that they may see the opinion [as to what was *scriptural baptism*] of a man justly held in

high esteem amongst them. The excuse of him and many others, for laying aside the *scripture-baptism*, confessed to be the scripture-baptism, and for substituting in the room of it *another* rite, *intirely another* rite, shall be considered in the next letter.

*I am,*

*my Lord, &c.*

## LETTER IV.

MY LORD,

**I** Am afraid, your Lordship, by this time, begins to think me *tedious*. You do not want all this labour of proof, that the *scripture-baptism* is *immersion*. You know it: you own it: you bear witness publickly, before all the world, that baptism as now performed amongst us, is NOT KNOWN in the *New Testament*, the repository of the *only authentic* declarations concerning this duty; for "if baptism had been THEN performed as it is NOW amongst us, we should never have so much as heard of this form of expression, of *dying* and *arising again* in this rite. Plain account, p. 150.

My Lord, I presume not the attempt of informing *you*; but beg you will allow me the favour to stand up before you, an equitable and most capable *judge*, as a pleader in support of a matter of TRUTH

and **RIGHT** almost entirely cast out from *our* part of the world.

I say, *a matter of truth and right*, almost intirely cast out from *our* part of the world. For, thanks be to God, in other parts there are still *millions*, amengst whom the *New Testament* rite, that is, the *divine rite of immersion*, is still preserved. The vast *Russian* empire hold it fast, and *all other Churches*, who never submitted to the tyranny of the *Church of Roms*. But to return, I would desire any man, capable of the enquiry, to consider with meekness and candour these two Things: First, whether the *Greek*, of the *New Testament*, be not borrowed from the *Septuagint*, the *Greek* of the *Old Testament*.\*

If the case be so, then let it be considered, secondly, whether it were *possible* for the *New Testament* writers to choose out from all the *Greek* of the *Old Testament*

\* Note, That St. *Paul*, even to the *Hebrews*, quoted from the *lxx*, is proved in sundry examples by *bishop Pearson* in his learned preface to the *Septuagint*.

two words that can *more* precisely, and determinately [if so determinately] express and specify *that one particular* ceremony of washing the whole body, as distinct from *all other* purifications and washings, than the two words they have actually chosen, *viz.*  $\betaαπτίζω$  and  $\lambdaύω$ , to which add its compound  $\alphaπολύω$  ?

It has been already observed, that  $\betaαπτίω$  would scarce have done so well, it being not used in the *Septuagint* in any one place, I believe, where the very frequent ceremony of *washing the whole body* occurs. But supposing baptism were expressed in scripture by  $\betaαπτίω$ , a word which undoubtedly means *dipping*, if any word in the *Greek* tongue can mean it; yet, my Lord, a man disposed rather to hide and shun truth than embrace it, might find ways and means to get shift even of *this* word; thus—He reads in *Dan.* iv. 33. That *Nebuchadnezzar* was driven from man, and did eat *grafs* as oxen, and his body *was wet with the dew of heaven*. He reads the same

again, chap. v. ver. 21. But how is this in the Greek of those passages? It is thus: *απὸ τῆς ἀροσῆς τῷ ὑπαρχεῖ τῷ σωματικῷ ΕΒΑΦΗ.* [dipt] Now we all know, that a person is wet with dew, not by *immersion* into it, but by its distillation in gentle drops, we are *sprinkled* by it. Hence, in scripture and common language, *drop as the dew*, and *drops of dew*. A clear proof, that *βαπτίω* signifies to *sprinkle*. And thus my Lord, there is *no* word, whose literal, strict and proper meaning may not be evaded, whenever an *allusive* and *metaphorical* sense can be found. Its *literal* sense, even where there is no possible room for *figure*, may be thrown aside, and the *figurative* import brought in, whenever it is convenient to serve an *hypothesis*. And so I have known it actually fare with the offspring of *βαπτίω*, viz. *βαπτιζω*, particularly in *1 Corinth. x. 2. And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud, and in the sea.*

What every school-boy, capable of looking into his lexicon, knows to be the strict

literal meaning of the word, is set aside, where it occurs only in its *literal* import, by the help of a few circumstances in a mere *figure* and *allusion*; thus, the *cloud*, which hung over the children of *Israel*, is a watery substance, *sprinkling* its water in *drops*. “ The *sea*, which was *as a wall* “ *unto them on the right hand and on the* “ *left*; by the force of the strong wind “ *which blew*, sent forth a great spray or “ *sprinkling*. So they were plentifully “ *sprinkled* by the cloud above, and by the “ *waters on each side*. ”

But a man of plain sense, not thinking of this cloud or pillar of *fire*, dropping down *water*; but of opinion, with your Lordship, that the baptism of scripture is *immersion*, would be apt to apprehend, here is an allusion to the custom of *immersion*; the *Israelites* being as it were *covered* by the cloud over, and the *waters on each side* of them. Or as *Gregorius*, on the place, expresses it, “ The “ *cloud was over their head*: so also is the

" water over the head of those who are  
 " baptized. The sea *encompassed* their  
 " sides: so also does the water *encompass*  
 " those who are *baptized*." "*Nubes im-*  
 " *pendebat illorum capiti: Sic & aqua iis*  
 " *qui baptizantur. Mare circumdabat*  
 " *eorum latera: Sic & aqua eos qui bapti-*  
 " *zantur.*""

We who are so little used to washing the whole body in a religious way, are apt to wonder, where, and how, such prodigious numbers, as are mentioned in the *New Testament* to be baptized, could be accommodated if they were immersed in water? But my Lord, it needs only to be considered, the principal scene of baptism lay in a country, where *immersion* was quite *familiar*, and *must*, by the very laws of their religion, come into *daily* use through all parts of the land; and as it is then the wonder will cease. For, as *the* *Shop* *Patrick* observes, " there are so *many* washings prescribed [in the law *of Moses*] that it is reasonable to believe, there were not only at *Jerusalem*,

“ and all other cities, but in every village  
 “ several bathing places contrived for these  
 “ legal purifications, that men might,  
 “ without much labour, be capable to  
 “ fulfil these precepts.” *Comment on Lev.*  
*xxv. 12.*

I come now, my Lord, to what was promised in the last letter, *viz.* to consider the *excuse* of those, who, though they confess the *scriptural baptism* to be *immersion*, yet apologize for a departure from it; and, of two quite different distinct laws and institutions, put one in the room of the other. In consequence thereof, it is come to that pass, that what at first was done *but seldom*, and in supposed cases of urgent necessity, is now become the universal, constant practice; and the *one* baptism, the *acknowledged* one baptism of scripture is *intirely cast out*, in favour of **ANOTHER RITE**; except among a handful of people, who still preserve the primitive form.

Mr. Baxter, we have already seen, excuses the matter by the *coldness* of our cli-

mate, *Calvin*, the celebrated reformer at Geneva, observes, in his exposition of *Acts* viii. 38. "We see here what was the " baptismal rite amongst the *ancients*; for " they *plunged the whole body in the water*, " Now 'tis the custom for the minister to " *sprinkle* only the body or head." And he too excuses this *sprinkling*; but how I cannot well recollect, having not his book at hand. Bishop *Burnet*, though he thus describes the primitive baptism, " With no other garments but what might " serve to cover nature; they at first *laid* " them down in the water, as a man is " laid in a *grave*, and then they said " these words, " *I baptize, or wash thee,* " *in the name, &c.* Then they raised " them up again, and clean garments " were put on them: from whence came " the phrases of being *baptized into* " *Christ's death*, of being *buried with* " him by *baptism into death*: of our be- " ing risen with *Christ*, and of our put- " ting on the *Lord Jesus Christ*, of putting " off the *old man*, and putting on the *new*." And though he justly observes, " sacra-

“ ments ate *positive* precepts, which are  
 “ to be measured only by the *institution*,  
 “ in which there is *not room* left for us  
 “ to carry them any farther ;” yet, for-  
 getting his own measure of the institution,  
*viz.*, *the party baptized was laid down in the*  
*water, as a man is laid in the grave,*“ He  
 “ says, the danger of *dipping* in *cold cli-*  
*mates* may be a very good reason for  
 “ *changing* the form of baptism to *sprink-*  
*ling.*” *Expos.* xxxix *Articles*, pages  
 226, 300, 346, *Edit.* 1. or p. 279, 374,  
 5, 436. 5th. *Edit.* 8vo. 1746.

But, as the good Bishop observes, in the page last cited, on the other sacrament, and on the change made therein by the church of *Rome*, “All reasoning upon this head is  
 “ an arguing *against the institution* ; as if  
 “ *Christ* and his apostles had not well  
 “ *considered* it ; but that 1200 years after  
 “ them, a consequence should be ob-  
 “ served, that till then had not been  
 “ thought of, which made it *reasonable* to  
 “ *alter the manner of it*. He who insti-  
 “ tuted it knew best, what was most fit.

"ting and most reasonable; and we  
"must choose rather to *acquiesce in his*  
"commands, than in our own *reasonings.*"

Page 347.

It is evident to your Lordship, that when our blessed Saviour said unto the apostles, *Go teach all nations, baptizing them*, they understood him to mean *dipping*. Here then is *one* only rule and law for *all nations*. No provision for making a difference between *warm* climates and *cold*. Not the least hint of *two* rites, of which the administrator may take his *choice*, according to his own prudence and discretion; but there is *one* law, *one* institution, for all nations upon the face of the earth; *Go teach and dip them*. Why then my Lord, do we not *acquiesce* in this command, but change it by our own *reasoning*?

But I beg leave to say two or three things in particular to the plea for this *confessed alteration.*

First, coldness of climate is an excuse which, make the best of it, can serve but for some part of the year, and for some weakly constitutions ; and yet the practice of *sprinkling* is universal and constant, in the hot season as well as cold, and on the most robust and healthy as well as the weak. The reason offered in justification of the *new way* implies, that were it not for *necessity*, the *primitive baptism* should be observed ; nevertheless it is not observed, where no shadow of necessity is pretended. Such commonly is the end and effect of departing from our rule : Human nature falls in with what is least troublesome. We first plead a necessity of relaxing in certain cases ; these cases continually multiply in favour of *ease* and *indulgence*, and then *custom* carries all before it. Dr. *Wäll*, giving the reasons why in queen *Elizabeth*'s reign the custom of *dipping* was laid aside, observes, “ It being allowed to *weak* children to be baptised by *affusion*, many fond ladies and gentlewomen first, and then by degrees the common people, would obtain the

“ favour of the priest to have *their* chil-  
 “ dren pass for weak children, too ten-  
 “ der to endure *dipping* in the water.” \*

Vol. 2. page 391. Edit. 1.

Secondly, *Immersion* was the constant practice in this same *cold* climate for many hundred years (the change into *sprinkling* as a general practice, being scarcely two hundred years old) and yet I believe no history can be produced of its having been of ill consequence even to infants. Take the affair only in a *medical* view, and cold bathing is not only *safe*, but very *useful*, many times, to tender babes, which made the late Dr. *Cheyne* say, “ I cannot sufficiently admire how it [cold bathing] should ever have come into such disuse, especially among *Christians*, when commanded by the greatest lawgiver that ever was, under the direction of God’s holy spirit, to his chosen people, and perpetuated to us in the *immersion* at baptism by the same Spirit, who with infinite wisdom, in this, as in every

“ thing else, that regards the temporal  
 “ and eternal felicity of his creatures,  
 “ combines their *duty* with their *happi-*  
 “ *ness.*” *Essay on Health, &c.* Chap. 4.  
 Sect. 7.

Thirdly, The rule [God will have mercy and not sacrifice] may justly be applied to excuse from *baptism itself*, [that is, as I understand it, from *immersion*] those who cannot receive it without manifest *danger*; but, I think, will by no means justify a change of *baptism* into *another quite different rite*. For illustration sake, my Lord, I beg leave to mention the case of an old-testament rite, *circumcision*.

It was a divine appointment, that this rite should be observed with respect to every *Jewish* male at eight days old. Yet during the *Israelites* travel through the wilderness, for the space of *forty years*, it was *omitted*. The reason of which was the danger and great inconvenience that must arise from it, in their travelling unsettled condition. *Vide Patrick and other expositors on Joshua*

v. But suppose the *Jews*, from the undoubted inconvenience of circumcising the part *appointed*, had reasoned themselves into the practice of circumcising a *finger* or *toe*, would not this have been an unwarrantable departure from the institution of God? Unquestionably it would. Who required *this* at their hand? And especially would they be not chargeable with a notorious perversion of a plain positive precept, if, from this plea of necessity in the wilderness, they should take occasion to make the change *total* and *perpetual*, upon all persons, and in all times? And how long soever this alteration had prevailed, would it not be justifiable, and matter of commendation, nay even *duty*, in those persons who *saw* the deviation from the declared will of the *Institutor*, to reject this circumcision of *human device*, and restore it to its first institution? We must think so, unless the antiquity of error excuse it, and make that right, which at first was wrong.

If therefore, baptism *was originally immersion*, let it be immersion still ; for, as your most learned friend Dr. S. Clarke has observed, “ In things of *external appointment* and *mere positive institution*, “ where we cannot, as in matters of *natural and moral duty*, argue concerning the *natural reason and ground* of the obligation, and the *original necessity* of the thing itself ; we have nothing to do but to obey the *positive command*. God is infinitely better able than we, to judge of the *propriety and usefulness* of the things he institutes ; and it becomes us to obey with humility and reverence.” *Expos. Church Cat.* page 305, &c. Edit. 2.

Your Lordship will suffer me to add, there is *not* so great a difference between circumcising a *finger* and the *foreskin*, as between covering the *whole body in water*, and *sprinkling the face*. It would be *circumcision* still, only of a different part ; but *batheing and sprinkling*, the book of God

always considers as *two* institutions quite distinct.

In what has been advanced in these Letters, your Lordship knows, I have been pleading for a *return* of the *ancient primitive* baptism of the Church. I am sorry that fonts of *modern* structure are so dwindle~~d~~ in size, that an infant cannot be *dipt* in them ; and shall be very glad if we are recovered to so just a sense of the *divine authority* in this institution, as to conclude  
 " *we have nothing to do but observe the positive command, and with humility and reverence obey the original institution,*"  
 that is, to *dip* the party baptized *in the name, &c.*

For, if your Lordship's observation be right, that " *the due manner* of performing this positive duty depends entirely upon the will and declaration of him who institutes or ordains it ;" and *no manner* is declared by him, but that *immersion*, which, you say, was the cus-

tem in the *first* and *only authentic days* ;  
your Lordship then instructs me to con-  
clude, that to follow any *direction*, which  
turns us off from this *immersion*, is, so  
far, making it *our own institution*, and  
not the institution of *him* who first ap-  
pointed it.

*I am, my Lord,*

*Your Lordship's most obedient*

*umble Servant.*

LETTER

## L E T T E R V.

MY LORD,

**I**F baptism be any thing at all to *us*; if any religious regard be due to it, it is from its being a divine command, not confined to the first converts to christianity, but reaching to *us*.\* Whoever believeth not so is guilty of presumption, to do that *in the name of the Lord*, which the Lord requireth not. It is far from the simplicity and godly-sincerity of the gospel Ministers to put on the appearance of a most *sacred* and *solemn* transaction *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*, if, in our conscience, we believe this is no part of the will of God reaching to *us*. If baptism be an institution designed by *Jesus Christ*, for all ages of the Chri-

\* This point has been lately stated by the Editor, in a *Short Essay on Baptism*; intended to elucidate the Question concerning the extent and perpetuity of its obligation.

tian Church, let us treat it with religious regard: if we be otherwise minded, let us be so honest and faithful to religion, and to the world, as to lay it aside.

The former Letters enquired into the manner of this rite: or what the New Testament intends by the action of *baptizing*. The result of our enquiry was this: *The phraseology of the New Testament is taken from the Septuagint, or Greek translation of the Old*: and such words, and only such words, are used to express the action of *baptizing*, as *there* denote and specify, precisely, that particular precept of *bathing*,\* or covering the whole body in water;

• This remark assigns the true reason why the words *καταβυθίζω*, *καταποντίζω*, *καταδύω*, or *καταδύω*, *δύπτω* and *βυθίζω* are not applied to the institution of Baptism; they are not words used by the Septuagint to express the act of *Bathing*, or covering the whole body in water. They do indeed include the idea of dipping, but then it is under particular circumstances, and with a peculiar effect. The two first mean dipping in the *Sea*, and all, in their *primary* sense, denote such a dipping as precludes *rising again* and *ends in destruction*. Matt. 14. 30. Chap. 18. 6. and Exod. 15. 5. in the Septuagint. Editor.

a rite perfectly distinct from, and never confounded with any other rite of *sprinkling, pouring, &c.*

And I beg leave once more to propose it to public consideration,—Whether it is possible, agreeably to the Language of the Old Testament, to chuse out words that shall, more precisely, and strongly, convey the idea of *immersion*, than what the Evangelists and Apostles have actually chosen, when they speak of *baptism*?—Could any one have helped them to apter and more determinate language, on *supposition* that they wanted and designed to express to their brethren and country-men that familiar and frequent practice among them, of washing the whole body?—If the Spirit which inspired the Apostles, had given them a foresight of the controversies which have arisen on this head, could they have fixed on words better adapted to prevent such controversies? to prevent its being ever said, “The language of the New-Testament concerning this duty is so

“ indeterminate and lax, that it matters  
 “ not, whether, in baptism, you cover  
 “ the whole body, or apply a little water  
 “ to a part of it.”—Let scripture be its  
 own interpreter, comparing one part with  
 another.

Have not then the New Testament-writers taken from their own scriptures that language, and all that language, and, I think it may be added, only that language, which expresses the *one, only* usage so often specified by *bathing the flesh, or person, in water?*

It is easy for a reader, though of good understanding, to lose himself amidst clouds and darkness, if he knows nothing of the learned languages, when the books he reads draw him to the perusal of disputes about the sense and meaning of an *unknown tongue.*

But as the whole of the affair, so far as we have yet gone, turns upon one short plain question; so every man of common

sense can observe, whether a person of candour, and allowed to be a capable judge, will give his answer, *yea* or *nay*. The short, plain question is this. Is there ground and reason to conclude, the writers of the New Testament would have used *other* expressions, if they had intended that one rite of *immersion*? If so, what are those *other* expressions?—This is bringing the matter to a short and plain issue.

I believe, my Lord, the most exact and rigorous examination of the foregoing queries will end in this conclusion: That by the sacramental baptism of water, the *New Testament* means, precisely and only, *immersion in water*.

So that the learned *Mr. Selden*, who lived a little after immersion grew out of use, had too much reason to say, “In “England, of late years, I ever thought, “the Parson *baptized his own Fingers*, ra-

" ther than the *Child.*" *Selden's Works,*  
Vol. VI. Col. 2008.

If these things are so ; then there is another consideration, deserving the attention of *Protestants* ; namely, What reply shall we make to the *Papists*? Who insist upon it, they do not *more* change and innovate in the administration of the *Lord's Supper*, by withholding the *Cup* from the Laity, than we do in the administration of *baptism*, by setting aside *immersion*, and substituting *sprinkling* or *pouring* in its place. We call theirs a *half-communion* ; and justly, because they withhold the wine. What if they call ours, on the same ground, a *half-baptism*? How shall we reply ? I doubt the *Papists* will ever remain unanswered by a consistent *Protestant*, until he confesses *immersion* the *only baptism* ; and that it cannot be proved, the church of *Rome* has more departed from the Christian rule, in their manner of administering the *Lord's Supper*, than we have in our manner of administering *Baptism*.

I wish this matter may be duly considered; that we may *take off occasion from those who seek occasion* to support themselves in error. A sensible Roman Catholic, who knows his strength, or perhaps rather our weakness; will always retort upon us, "Shew us your authority for laying aside the primitive and scriptural *im-merision*; and we will produce our authority for withholding the cup from the Laity.

I come now, my Lord, to what was promised at the conclusion of the former LETTER; namely, to enquire into the *nature* and *end* of Christian Baptism. Throughout which enquiry, I shall carefully keep in sight, as a sure guide, the two following propositions of your Lordship.

I. "All *positive* duties, or duties made such by *institution* alone, depend entirely on the *will* and *declaration* of the Person who institutes or ordains them, with respect to the real design and end of them."

II. "The passages in the *New Testament*, which relate to this duty, and they alone, are the original accounts of the *nature* and *end* of this institution, and the only authentic declarations, upon which we of later ages can *safely depend*; being written by the immediate followers of our *Lord*; those who were witnesses themselves of the institution; or were instructed by those who were so; and join with them in delivering down one and the same account of this religious duty."

The author of a well known book, entitled *The Moral Philosopher*, written in favour of infidelity, would have it, "that baptism and the Lord's Supper are not Christian institutions, because the external elementary parts of these sacraments were in use before, as national rites, usages, &c. amongst the Jews."

To him Dr. *Leland* returns this plain, satisfactory answer: "But that which makes any thing to be properly a *Christian*"

" *Christian institution*, is its being instituted or  
 " appointed by *Christ* himself, to be ob-  
 " served in his church: if therefore Bap-  
 " tism and the Lord's Supper were thus  
 " instituted or appointed by *Christ* him-  
 " self, they are, properly speaking, *Chris-*  
 " *tian institutions*, and it doth not alter  
 " the case, whether we suppose them,  
 " with regard to the outward elementary  
 " part of them, to have been among the  
 " *Jews* before, or not." Vid. *Leland's*  
*Answer to the Moral Philosopher*. Edit. 1<sup>o</sup>  
 page 478, 479.

The first account of baptism, as a *Chris-*  
*tian institution*, is in *Matt. xxxviii. 19.*  
*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations; bap-*  
*tizing them in the name of the Father, and*  
*of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*

The plain sense and meaning of which  
 words cannot be better expressed than in  
 the following paraphrase of Doctor *S. Clarke*, viz. " *Go therefore and preach*  
 " *the gospel to all the world, making*

" disciples out of every nation, and bap-  
 " tizing them with water *in the name,*  
 " &c. that is, receiving them to a *pro-*  
 " *fession of the belief,* and an obligation  
 " to the practice of that religion, which  
 " God the Father has revealed and taught  
 " by his Son, and confirmed and estab-  
 " lished by the **Holy Ghost.**"

St *Mark* gives the same account of this institution, though in different words.

*Mark* xvi. 15, 16. *And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.* That is, saith the above Paraphraſt, " Preach the gospel to all mankind. He that embraces my religion, and by baptism enters into an obligation to obey it, and lives accordingly, shall be saved: but he that rejects the gospel, either by obstinate unbelief, or by impenitent disobedience, shall be damned."

It is certain, the Scripture makes a difference between the baptisms of *John*

and *Christ*; for the same persons who had already received *John's* baptism, were baptized a second time *in the name of the Lord Jesus*, *Acts xix. 3, 4, 5.*

The cheif distinctions are these following:

I. The baptism of *John* was confined to the *Jews*: but Christian Baptism is appointed for *all nations*.

*John* took his station by the river *Jordan*, for the convenience of immersing the great multitudes that resorted to him: and there went out to him *Jerusalem*, and all *Judea*, and all the region round about *Jordan*, and were baptized of him in *Jordan*, confessing their sins, *Matt. iii. 5, 6, 7.* But *Christ* coming, a light to enlighten the *Gentiles*, as well as for the glory of his people *Israel*; therefore his baptism is appointed for the *Gentiles* as well as *Jews*. *Go, teach all nations, baptizing them*, saith *St. Matthew*. And *St. Mark*, *preach the gospel to every creature*; be that believeth [whoever be-

*lieveth, whether Jew or Gentile] and is baptizeth, shall be saved.*

II. John baptized the people to *prepare* them for the faith of the Messiah *about to come* or *just coming*: but Christian baptism is declarative of faith in the Messiah not *coming*, but *come*.

This distinction is proved by the following texts.

Acts xix. 4. *Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. John i. 31. That he [Christ] should be made manifest to Israel; therefore am I come baptizing with water.*

But Jesus being declared, manifested proved to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead; and all power being actually given to him in heaven and in earth; therefore, Christian baptism is *into the name of the* Sa

so manifested, as well as *of the Father*,  
Matt. xxviii. 18, 19.

III. The Scripture I think, affords ground also for this distinction, *viz.* Christian baptism teacheth expressly faith in the *Holy Spirit*; which doth not appear to be any part of the instruction necessary at *John's baptism*: for the disciples at *Ephesus*, who had been baptized unto *John's baptism*, tell St. *Paul*, *They had not so much as heard, whether there be any Holy Ghost*, *Acts xix. 2.*

Some learned divines, make another *very great and important* difference between the two baptisms; that is, *John's baptism excluded infants*, but Christian baptism *includes them*.

Dr. *Whitby* observes, "It is not to be wondered at that *Infants* were not baptized during *John's ministry*; because the baptism thus used by *John* and *Christ's* disciples, [*viz.* before the institution of *Christian baptism*]" was "only the baptism of *repentance*, and

" *faith* in the Messiah which was for  
 " to come; of both which infants were  
 " incapable." *Annotat. in Matt. xix.*  
 13, 14. He says the same in his *Differ-  
 entiation on Matthew xxviii. 19.*

*Turrettin*, Divinity-Professor at *Geneva*,  
 says *John* admitted *none* to baptism but  
 such as confessed their sins; because  
 his business lay in baptizing the *adult*,  
 &c. " *Johannes neminem ad baptis-  
 mum admittebat, nisi confitentem peccata  
 sua, quia agebatur de adultis baptizandis,  
 &c.*" *Turret. Instit. Vol. III. page 468.*

How far this sentiment (that the bap-  
 tism of *John* excluded infants, but that  
 yet they have a right to Christian bap-  
 tism) is agreeable to scripture, shall next  
 be considered.

*I am, my Lord,*  
*Your Lordship's most obedient*  
*bumble Servant.*

LETTER

( 57 )

## LETTER VI.

MY LORD,

**W**hoever will give himself the trouble to look back on the first part of these Letters, and read the texts produced concerning *John's* baptism, will, I believe, perceive no footprint in them of *his* baptizing infants: nor is there any declaration, or the least hint, that the disciples of *Christ*, before his death, baptized any but grown people. As Dr. *Whitby* observes, "They only baptized, " as *John* had done, into the faith of "the Messiah which was to come; and " with that baptism of repentance, which "prepared the *Jews* for the reception " of his kingdom.—It is not therefore "to be wondered, that they baptized "not those *infants*, who could not, by "an actual repentance, prepare them-

" selves for the coming of that Messiah,  
" who was then at hand." *Whitby's  
Dissert. on Matt. xxviii. 19.*

The disciples of Christ, during his ministry on earth, as well as the disciples of *John*, were very well acquainted with the institution of baptism; for they themselves baptized great multitudes. *The Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,* John iv. 1, 2. But they administered a baptism in which infants had *no part*. When therefore our blessed Saviour, after his resurrection, instituted *his* sacrament of baptism, if infants were to be received to it, " It cannot be doubted that he himself sufficiently *declared* this to his first and immediate followers; which sufficient and only authentic declaration must appear in some passage of the New Testament."

There seems the greatest reason to expect some express declaration on this head; because, otherwise, men, who had hitherto been *used to exclude infants*, and to look upon them *no way concerned* in the ordinance of baptism, would be likely still to pass them by, and not think of them as coming within the reach of their fresh commission. Men who, during *John's ministry*, had already baptized an infinite multitude of the *adult only* amongst the *Jews*, would naturally conclude, on their being sent forth to practise the *same rite* amongst the *Gentiles*, that with them also the *adult only* were proper subjects, unless there appeared something upon the face of their commission to teach them otherwise.

The baptism of infants being *biterto uncommanded*, concerning which God had given them nothing in charge; it will seem quite necessary they should have some plain, clear, determinate instructions on this head; especially and above all

in this sort of duty, which owes *all* its obligation and *all* its virtue to *positive command*: I say it will seem quite necessary they should have some plain, determinate instructions, if they were, for the future to give baptism to persons to whom they had not been used, nor directed to give it.

And this will seem yet more reasonable to be expected, if in process of time, and where Christianity came to be the established religion, the *first completion* and *express import* of this rite were to undergo such a *change*, that, instead of being the sign of *repentance* towards God, and *faith* towards our Lord Jesus Christ, in the party baptized; it should, universally, be administered at an age and time of life when the baptized know nothing about *repentance* and *faith*.

This, my Lord, is actually the case in all Christian countries. Baptism is not, as it was in the beginning, a sign of re-

penitance and faith in the person baptized. Babes of a few days old know nothing of these things: and yet these are, according to all *legal establishments*, the only subjects of it, except, what happens very rarely, the baptism of *profelytes*.

Let us now examine the passages of The New Testament, and see whether Jesus Christ has by himself, of his immediate followers, *declared* that infants are the subjects of this institution.

The first account of baptism as a Christian ordinance is *Matt. xxviii. 19.* *Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghost.* Which commission is, in *St. Mark xvi. 15, 16.* thus expressed, *Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned.*

The only difference in the accounts of these two Evangelists is, that *Matthew* in his expression *teach*, [μαθητεύομε, *disciple*] all nations, is more concise than *Mark*, who instead of it says, *preach the gospel to every creature, he that believeth, &c.*

It may not be unnecessary to observe, that the word in *Matthew* rendered [*teach*] is not the word commonly rendered *teach* in the New Testament. The word commonly used is [διδάσκω] which occurs very often: but the other word [μαθητεύω, *teach*] in the baptismal commission of *Matthew*, is used only three times more in all the New Testament. *Matt.* xiii. 52. *Every scribe WHICH IS INSTRUCTED* [μαθητεύομεν] *into the kingdom of heaven,* *Matt.* xxvii. 57. *Joseph who also himself WAS JESUS'S DISCIPLE* [εμαθητεώτας το Ιησού]. *Acts* xiv. 21. *When they had preached the gospel to that city, and HAD TAUGHT many* [μαθητεύσασθεν]. They did not barely *preach the gospel*, but

taught so effectually as to prevail on many to become *disciples*, or *believers*. This is the plain import of the original.

The common appellation of *Christian believers*, occurring in very numerous passages of the New Testament, is [μαθηται] *disciples*. As this is the usual name of believers in *Christ*, we have the verb of it in our Lord's commission, where he bids his followers to go and make *converts* to him throughout the world. So that whereas μαθητευω implies *teaching*, full as much as the more common word [διδασκω], the difference is, that the former has a more precise and determinate meaning; conveying to the apostles this idea, viz. *So teach the people*, as to persuade them to become *my disciples*.

I do not dislike the rendering, *disciple* *all nations*; provided the idea of *teaching* make a *necessary* part of it, and that *disciple* and *baptize* be not taken for *synony-*

mous terms, as some make them, I think, without any foundation in scripture, or just criticism. As in *John* iv. 1. *μαθητας* *ποιει* *και* *βαπτιζει* contain *two distinct* ideas, *viz.* first to *make disciples*, and then to baptize them; so *Matt.* xxviii. 19. *μαθητευοτε, βαπτιζοτε*, express the same two distinct ideas; *viz.* make disciples, and baptize them. First *convert* them to the faith of Christ; and when that is done, baptize them\*; nothing being more common in the Greek language, than to express by a verb and a participle, what we express by two verbs.

\* " *Μαθητευειν* here is to *preach the gospel to all nations*, and to engage them to *believe* it in order to their *profession of that faith by baptism*; as seems apparent (1) from the parallel commission, *Mark* xvi. 15. *Go, preach the gospel to every creature, he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved.* (2) From the scripture notion of a *disciple*, that being still the same as a *believer*. — I desire any one to tell me, how the apostles could *μαθητεειν, make a disciple, of an Heathen, or unbelieving Jew, without being μαθηται, or teachers of them, whether they were not sent to preach to them that could bear, &c.*"

*Whitby's Note on Matt., xxviii. 19.*

I submit these few remarks to your Lordship's better judgment and skill. And if they are true, then, I suppose, all that the apostles could learn from the *commission* is, that whereas they had been used before to teach the *Jews*, and to baptize such *only of them* as professed to receive and believe their doctrine? they were henceforth to enlarge their plan; and, preaching *to all sorts of people*, to baptize those who *believed* their report. So their commission expressly runs: *Go ye into all the world; and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth [your doctrine] and is baptizeth, &c.*

Your Lordship instructs me to say,  
 " It cannot be doubted Jesus Christ suffi-  
 " ciently declared to his first and im-  
 " mediate followers the *whole* of what  
 " he designed should be understood by,  
 " or implied in this duty; for this being  
 " a positive institution, depending en-  
 " tirely upon his will, and not designed  
 " to contain *any thing* in it, but what he

" himself should please to *affix* to it ; it  
 " must follow that he *declared* his mind  
 " about it *fully* and *plainly* : because  
 " otherwise, he must be supposed to in-  
 " stitute a duty, of which no one could  
 " have *any notion* without his institution,  
 " and at the same time, not to instruct  
 " his followers *sufficiently* what that duty  
 " was to be."

Now your Lordship will suffer me to ask, where has Jesus Christ *declared* his mind, and declared it *fully* and *plainly* that infants are to receive Christian baptism ? It may be seen plainly enough, that he sent forth his apostles to gather a people to himself : to make *disciples, converts, believers*, in all nations ; and that nothing hindered their being baptized, *if they believed*. But with regard to any part of the human species *not* so qualified, is there not, I appeal to your Lordship, an *intire profound silence* ? Is not our Saviour's commission, far from declaring fully and plainly in favour of

children's baptism, perfectly silent on this head? Does it say more than this; *make disciples, converts, believers, amongst all nations, and baptize them?*

If our Lord's commission expresses no more, then I observe it is a rule readily admitted, that a limited commission amounts to a *prohibition* of the things not therein contained, as in the case of another positive institution, circumcision; the order, every *man-child* shall be circumcised; is, we all know, a *prohibition* with regard to the *female*.

But if it should be thought there is some obscurity in so brief an account as this of *Matthew* and *Mark*, the *subsequent practice* of the apostles must be owned the best and only *authentic* explanation and comment on their master's law. This shall be next considered.

*I am,*

*my Lord, &c.*

G

LETTER

## LETTER VII.

**W**E are now, my Lord, to consider the *practice* of the *apostles* and *first teachers*, as the best and only authentic comment on their master's law.

The first mention of baptism *administered* after Christ's ascension, is *Act*s ii. 38, 41. *Then Peter said unto them, REPENT, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Then they THAT GLADLY RECEIVED HIS WORD were baptized.*

There never was a better opportunity for the apostles to shew, clearly and fully, the whole of what they understood by Christian baptism, than this recorded in *Act*s ii. It was one of those great festivals,

when devout people were come together at *Jerusalem out of every nation under heaven*, and when the disciples received such an effusion of the *holy Ghost* as excited all men's curiosity and astonishment. *They were all amazed and marvelled*; and asked, *What meaneth this?* Upon this, *Peter* stood up with the eleven, and preached *Christ* to them so effectually, that *they were pricked in the heart, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?* Then *Peter* said unto them, *Repent, and be baptized, &c. for the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.* What was the effect and consequence of this sermon? It was this; *Then they that GLADLY RECEIVED HIS WORD were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls: and they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers.*

When these men under deep concern, pricked in their heart, ask direction and advice, saying, *What shall we do?* and Peter instructs them to *repent and be baptized*; does he say also, bring your offspring to baptism? Nothing of this: but all that the history relates is, *They that gladly received his word were baptized*; and *the three thousand souls*, who were added at this time, *continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers*. This is in effect telling us *how many* were baptized, *viz.* about three thousand, *who continued steadfast, &c.*

Infants bear no part in this history of baptism; unless it be supposed that they are included in verse 39. *For the PROMISE is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.*

Upon this your Lordship will permit me to make two or three very obvious remarks.

(1.) *The PROMISE* is not *baptism*, but expressed in the words immediately foregoing, viz. *Ye shall receive THE GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST*: a promise so remarkably fulfilled, as created astonishment in St. Peter's auditory; and to the accomplishment whereof he invites their attention in the following words, verses 16, 17, &c. *THIS is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel:—And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of MY SPIRIT upon all flesh, &c.* This promise, St. Peter tells his hearers, they saw fulfilled in him and his brethren, verse 33. For *Jesus being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received of the Father the PROMISE OF THE HOLY GHOST, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear.*

(2.) *You and your children* is nothing more than *you and your POSTERITY* [τοῖς τεκνοῖς υμῶν]. So in *John viii. 39.* *If ye were Abraham's CHILDREN* [τεκνα] *ye would do the works, &c.* *Acts xiii.*

32, 33. *The promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same UNTO US THEIR CHILDREN* [τεκνοῖς]. Matt. xxvii. 25. *His blood be on us and on OUR CHILDREN* [τεκνα οὐών]. An imprecation which has miraculously rested on them, and their *descendants*, for almost seventeen hundred years.

(3.) This *promise* takes place neither in *them* nor their *children*, nor the *Gentiles* (them that are afar off) but *on condition* of their *believing*, expressed in the text by—*as many as the Lord our God shall call.*

So that the word *children* here, has no reference to the infantile state; nor does the *promise* mean *baptism*. The learned Doctors, *Hammond* and *Whitby*, though they have both written in favour of infant baptism, conclude *this text* is nothing to the purpose. The words of the first are, “ If any have made use of that very

“ unconcludent argument [*the promise is made to you, and to your children*] I have nothing to say in defence of them. “ I think the word *children* there, is really the *posterity* of the *Jews*, and “ not peculiarly their infant children.”

*Resol. 6 Qu. Edit. 12mo. P. 256. Sect.*

81. And *Whitby*, “ These words will not prove a right of *infants* to receive baptism: the *promise* mentioned here being that only of the *Holy Ghost*, mentioned, verses 16, 17, 18. and so relating only to the times of the miraculous effusion of the *Holy Ghost*, and to those persons who, by *age* were made capable of those *extraordinary gifts*.” *Annot. in A&ts ii. 38, 39.*

The next administration of baptism is in *A&ts* viii. The success of the gospel at *Jerusalem* raised the envy and resentment of the unbelieving *Jews*; so that, verse 1. *there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem, and they were all scattered abroad, &c.* Upon

this dispersion, *Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them*; verse 5. *And when they BELIEVED Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN.* *Then Simon himself BELIEVED also, and—was baptized*, verses 12, 13.

Here likewise nothing is to be found but the baptism of professed *believers*. The history is so particular and exact, as to mention *men and women*: but there it stops. Had the sacred historian been a little more explicit, in a matter wherein your Lordship knows full well, and readily owns, we *can know nothing* but from *plain declaration*, and are least of all left to our own reasonings; had he, I say, been a little more explicit, and said, *men, women, and children*, if the fact were really so; it would have prevented much doubt and controversy. But as in this same chapter, when he relates *Saul's* committing

*men and women* to prison, we naturally conclude, the persecutor's rage did not go so far as to imprison their *infants*; (at least there is nothing on which to rest a belief that he did) so from his stopping at *men and women* in his account of baptism, it seems, he could go no further, and says nothing of the baptism of their infants, because he knew nothing of it.

The writer of the *Acts*, is careful to make express mention of *children* in an historical fact of much less consequence, when children were really part of the company. Thus *Acts* xxi. 5. *They all brought us on our way, WITH WIVES AND CHILDREN, till we were out of the city.* We may observe in another instance or two, how carefully the scripture mentions *children*, when they are parties concerned. *Matt. xiv. 21. They that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside WOMEN AND CHILDREN* [*παιδιών, little children*]. And in the next chapter, which records another miracle of the like

sort, Matt. xv. 38. *They that did eat were four thousand men, BESIDE WOMEN AND CHILDREN* [παιδιῶν, *little children, infants.*]

These miracles, of feeding so many thousand men, from such scanty provision, would have been sufficiently great and illustrious, without the additional circumstance of *women* and *children*: but as they were parties concerned, they are mentioned,

And is it not strange, my Lord, that we *no where* find *children* mentioned, not *once* mentioned, if it were the apostles custom to baptize *them* with their parents? These servants and apostles of Christ, we have already observed, were no strangers to baptism *before* the death of their master. They knew it, and practised it in *John's* time. But to *whom* did they administer it? To the *adult only*: not to them *and their infants*. If afterwards they were to understand and practise this rite so *dif-*

ferently from what they had *just before* understood and practised ; if they were to baptize, not only the professors of repentance and faith, but their offspring too ; may we not expect to find such difference *expressed*, either in their Lord's commission, or in the authentic account of their *practice*, who baptized in obedience to his command ? But if neither Christ nor his apostles have *declared* infant baptism, how shall we know it to be their mind ?

The next baptism is that of the eunuch, *Acts* viii. 36, 37, &c. who received it on this profession of faith—I believe that *Jesus Christ is the Son of God*, verse 37. A noble monument of the simplicity of the first times ! What a world of strife and mischief would have been prevented, if the church had never departed from it ! As an eminent writer remarks ; “ It was “ never well with the christian church, “ since it began to be a matter of so “ much subtilty and wit for a man to be a “ true christian.” The multitude of ar-

ties since invented, and framed by *art and man's device*, are, as one speaks, “ Cobwebs that entangle and catch harmless flies, but the wasps break through.” They are only conscientious and thinking men, that is, men the most able and disposed to serve the cause of religion and virtue, that are, or *can* be incommoded and distressed by these things. Men of no thought, and of no conscience, or of flexible and pliant ones, will subscribe whatever the imposer shall please to enjoin.

*Acts ix. 18.* relates the baptism of St. *Paul* only. In the next chapter we have the baptism of *Cornelius* and his friends. *Cornelius* is said to be *one that feared God, with all his house*, ver. 2. The Jewish law so prohibited communication with the Gentiles, that St. *Peter*, the messenger of God to the Centurion, had a particular revelation to remove his scruples, and to convince him, he might freely go unto the Gentiles. In expectation of this im-

portant visit from the apostle, *Cornelius* had called together his kinsmen and near friends, verse 24.

When *Peter* was come into the Centurion's house, he found *many that were come together*, verse 27. *Cornelius*, in behalf of these and of himself, thus addresses the apostle, *Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God*, verse 33.

This assembly of *Gentiles* were so well disposed to receive the gospel, that, while *Peter* was speaking, the *Holy Ghost* fell on *all that heard the word*, verse 44. to the great surprize of the Jewish christians, who were *astonished*, *as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost*. *For they heard them speak with tongues*, verses 45, 46.

When *Peter* saw this great effect on his audience, he said, *Can any man forbid wa-*

ter that these should not be baptized, which have RECEIVED THE HOLY GHOST, as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the Name of the Lord. Whom does he command to be baptized? All that heard the word, and had received the Holy Ghost.\*

I have been thus particular in noting the family and friends of this devout man, to see if there be any trace of infants having a part in this history.

But still we find not the most distant hint, much less, what your Lordship requires in a positive institution, *a plain and full declaration*, that *children* are subjects admitted to christian baptism.

*I am my Lord, &c.*

LETTER

\* The qualification required in a christian bishop, *Tit. i. 6.* that he must have *faithful i.e. believing children*, is a proof that the christianity of the family of the children, much less of *all* the children, was not involved in that of the head, or parent; nor was always the consequence of it. Editor.

## LETTER VIII.

MY LORD,

I Have only one thing more to remark on the history of *Cornelius*. The people called *Quakers* are of opinion, that the baptism of *the Spirit* is the alone *christian baptism*, and the baptism of water belonged only to the dispensation of *John*. But in the case of *Cornelius* we have an instance under the *christian* dispensation and upon the call of the *Gentiles* to the faith of the gospel; wherein it appears the apostle *Peter* is so far from concluding that the baptism of the *Spirit* renders that of *water* unnecessary, that he infers directly the contrary, *viz.* No man ought to be against their baptism in water, because they had, previously, received *the baptism of the Holy Ghost*. Their baptism with the *Holy Ghost*, was the proof and

reasōn of their right to the baptism of water.

It remains to enquire, whether *the baptism of households*, mentioned in several passages of scripture, does not prove, or suppose the baptism of infants? We read, that *Lydia was baptized, AND HER HOUSEHOLD*, *Acts* xvi. 15.—that *the jailor was baptized, AND ALL HIS*, verse 33. and that *Paul baptized THE HOUSEHOLD of Stephanas*, *1 Cor. i. 16.*

Upon this your Lordship will please to indulge me these few plain observations.

(1.) It is certain the word *house*, or *household*, is often used where none are meant but such as are come to years of understanding\*. For example, *Luke xi. 17.*

\* *1 Sam. i. 21.* Is a striking instance of its being used to denote only *a part* of a family, and such a part, as in point of age and other circumstances, is not capable of the act, which is spoken of.  
 " *And the man Elkanah, and ALL HIS HOUSE, went*

*A house divided against a house, &c. John iv. 53. Himself believed, AND HIS WHOLE HOUSE. Acts ii. 36. Let ALL THE HOUSE of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, &c. Acts xviii. 8. Crispus—believed on the Lord, WITH ALL HIS HOUSE. Tit. i. 11. Deceivers, who subvert WHOLE HOUSES, teaching things they ought not. Consequently,*

(2.) To infer it as fact, that infants were baptized, as being part of the house, is *supposing*, and taking for *granted*, not *proving* the matter in question.

(3.) Of the three examples of households baptized, it is expressly said of one, [the jailor's] that *Paul and Silas spake the word of the Lord to him, and to ALL THAT WERE IN HIS HOUSE: and that*

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" up to offer to the Lord, the yearly sacrifice, and  
 " his vow. But Hannah went not up, for she said  
 " to her husband, I will not go up till the child be  
 " weaned." Editor.

*be believed in God, WITH ALL HIS HOUSE,*  
*Acts xvi. 32, 34.*

If all the *families* in *Great Britain* were obliged to take an oath of allegiance; any man who should hereafter read our history, would make a very wrong inference, if he should, merely from the word *families* or *households*, conclude, this oath was administred to children; though they are very capable of the *outward and visible sign*, which is only *kis-  
sing the book*. “ I think it unreasonable, “ says Dr. *Hammond*, that the apostle’s “ bare mention of baptizing his *household*, “ *1 Cor. i. 16.* should be thought com- “ petent to conclude, that *infants* were “ baptizd by him, when it is uncertain, “ whether there were any such at all in “ his house.” *Resol. six Qu. P. 274.*  
*Edit. 12mo.*

Thus, wheresoever we meet with the sacrament of baptism, whether amongst *Jews* or *Gentiles*, whether administred

by *John*, or the disciples of *Christ*; from the gospel of *Matthew*, where it first occurs, to the epistles of St. *Peter*, where we find it last there is, from the beginning to the end, a *total profound silence* concerning the baptism of infants.

And can we, my Lord, bring substantial proof out of this *universal void*? Is an entire perfect *silence* a sufficient *declaration* that our children are to receive this ordinance? I am entirely of your Lordship's opinion, " that this being a " positive institution, it must follow, our " blessed Lord *declared* his mind about it " *fully and plainly.*"

I may venture to assure your Lordship, I have no *interest* to serve by retaining my present opinion: and it will give me a sincere pleasure to discover the *text* or *texts*, where it is declared this institution belongeth to children.

Whoever shall do the kind office to shew me from some *authentic declaration*

of the New Testament, that infants were baptized, I promise him to be much more speedy in writing a retraction, than I have been to set down my reasons, at least what appear reasons to me, for differing in this point from the generality of my fellow christians.

Does not the very last passage of the New Testament, which makes mention of baptism, *viz.* 1 Pet. iii. 21. require such a *condition* of its efficacy, as children are utterly incapable of? *The like figure whereunto, even baptism, doth also now save us; not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but THE ANSWER OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE TOWARDS GOD.* The infant of a week, month, or year old, is merely passive, and might, where there is water enough for the purpose, have the filth of the flesh washed away; but what shall we say to *the answer of a good conscience?* without which qualification, St. Peter assures us, baptism is not saving. How shall we find a good con-

science in a creature that is not yet a moral agent? that can do neither good nor evil?

The Catechism says, *There are two sacraments ordained by Christ in his church, as generally necessary to salvation, viz. Baptism and the Lord's Supper.* Now because the New Testament is as silent on baptism, as the Lord's supper, for *children*; it may, I think, be fairly concluded, the want of baptism does not prejudice *their* salvation, any more than the want of the Lord's supper.

There was a time, your Lordship well knows, when it was the *general practice of the christian church* to give the Lord's supper to children; grounded on a mistake of that scripture, *except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood ye have no life in you.* The same notion of absolute and universal necessity, I suppose, led christians to baptize their children. No less a man than St. *Austin*

taught, and strenuously maintained, that *infants unbaptized* were adjudged to *ever-lasting punishments*, Grot. in *Matt. xix. 14.*

Men's opinions of the *ritual* parts of religion soon began to run extravagantly high\*, and still do so, far beyond the simplicity of the gospel: as if there were in the things themselves, without respect to the moral and spiritual qualifications of the receiver, a certain inexplicable *charm*, to defend us from our ghostly enemy, and ascertain salvation. And this wrong notion, of the absolute necessity of ceremonial observances, has been a very powerful engine in the hands of men aiming at spiritual dominion, to enslave their neighbours minds and consciences. In popish countries, the character of a *priest* must be of the highest im-

\* The necessity of the Lord's Supper for infants was taught by the consent of the eminent fathers of some ages, without any opposition from any of their contemporaries: and was delivered by them, not as doctors, but as *witnesses*, not as their own opinion, but as *apostolic tradition*. Chilling, P. 152, Edit. 1.

portance, when the people are taught, there is no possibility of going to heaven without the sacraments, and that *he* only is qualified to administer them.

I doubt, my Lord, we of the Protestant religion are not quite clear in this matter; and that we view positive institutions in somewhat the same wrong light, when, on the child's illness, we are in the utmost hurry to send for *the minister*, and think the innocent babe suffers an irreparable loss, if it expire before it be christened. Is not this a stronger attachment to rites and ceremonies, and laying more stress upon them, than even *the Jews* themselves did? For as they were not to circumcise their children till the *eighth day*, so I suppose they were in no pain for want of the ordinance to those who died under that age. Nay, as has been observed in the former letters; the rite was *intirely dropt*, and laid aside for no less than *forty years*, when, in the wilderness, the use of it became inconvenient.

I recollect on this occasion a remarkable passage concerning the learned Mr. *Dodwell*, as related by the worthy bishop of *Winchester*, in his *memoirs* of Dr. *Clarke*. “ Mr. *Dodwell*, says his lordship, in order to exalt the powers and dignity of the *priesthood*, endeavoured to prove, that the doctrine of the soul’s *natural mortality*, was the true and original doctrine; and that immortality was only a *baptism* conferred upon the soul by the gift of God, through the hands of one sett of regular ordained clergy.”

Is there no appearance of a similar extravagance in their notion of baptism, who, in all haste, must have the minister, if the child happen to be ill, before the convenient time of its baptism comes? Doth not this create a strong suspicion, that the bulk of our people look upon *immortal happiness as conferred in baptism*, through the hands of the clergy; and

imagine this immense privilege and blessing would otherwise be lost\* ?

In the days when *infant-communion* was the universal practice, it would doubtless have been thought a great injury to deny children the communion of saints. But the church having been long persuaded that it has no scripture foundation, has laid it aside, and would now be as much surprized to see infants brought to the communion, as she then would have been to see them excluded †.

\* Dr. *William Wibart*, late principal of the college of *Edinburgb*, laments the gross superstition into which the world is fallen concerning *baptism*, in the following words, “ Is a new-born child *weak*?—A minister must be got in all haste to perform a certain ceremony upon it, which they call *christening* it—the thing must be done—to save the infant from hell! Strange! that ever men under the advantages of the light of the gospel should have sunk into such notions of God and religion!” See his Discourses on several Subjects§. Printed for *Millar*, p. 99, 100.

§ See also a discourse entitled the *baptizing of sick and dying infants*, considered and shewn to be *improper, unnecessary, and useless* in *MOTTERSHEAD*’s religious discourses printed at *Glasgow*, 1759. Editor.

† Our accounts of the *Greek Church* inform us they still give the *Lord’s Supper* to children.

The truth seems to be this: the *scripture* being as entirely silent on the *baptism* as the *communion* of infants; and the *personal* qualifications of repentance, faith, and a good conscience being full as strongly, at least, required for baptism, as *self examination*, and other personal acts and qualities for the Lord's Supper, they have no concern in either of the two sacraments: nor ought it to be thought any more an injury, to withhold our children from *baptism*, than from the Lord's Supper.

And I think no difficult task to prove, that every objection that lies against their being admitted to the *communion*, lies also against their being admitted to *baptism*.

I keep, my Lord, this one plain simple point in view; that positive institutions owing all their obligation to *express command*, and there being *no* command for the baptism, any more than the communion of infants, the New Testament intended neither of the sacraments for them.

The *catechism*, which is considered as a plain summary of christian principles, teaches with no less evidence of truth, that of persons to be *baptized* is required *repentance*, whereby they forsake sin ; and *faith*, whereby they stedfastly believe, &c. than it does on the other sacrament ; that they who come to the *Lord's Supper* are required to *examine themselves*, &c. As to the promise of *sureties*, on which ground infants are *baptized*, might they not full as well be received to the *holy communion*. upon the same foundation ? May not *sureties* as well promise, they shall *examine themselves*, they shall stedfastly purpose, &c. as that they shall *repent* ? The world is obliged to your Lordship for the following instruction ; and I would to God we may learn it, *viz.* that nothing can remedy our mistakes on subjects of this nature, “ but persuading Christians “ to have recourse to *Jesus Christ*, and to “ those to whom he himself declared what “ his design was in this institution.”

*Plain account*, p. 6.

If then infants, for want of repentance and faith in themselves, be authorized to receive baptism on promise of their *sureties*, Christ or his apostles must have declared this. If they have, where is it? Is not the affair of sureties entirely a *supplement* of our own? Where doth holy scripture say one word about it? But “ in the matter, my Lord, of an institut-“ ed duty, (or a duty made so by the “ positive will of any person) no one “ can be a judge but the *institutor* him-“ self, of what he designed should be “ contained in it ; and because, supposing “ him not to have spoken his mind plain-“ ly about it, it is impossible that any o-“ ther person (to whom the *institutor* “ himself never revealed his design) should “ make up that defect : all that is added “ therefore to Christ’s institution, as a “ necessary part of it, ought to be ef-“ teemed only as the *invention* of those “ who add it ; and the more there is “ added, (let it be done with never so “ much *solemnity*, and never so great

“ pretences to *authority*) the less there  
“ is remaining of the simplicity of the  
“ *institution* as *Christ* himself left it. I  
“ am the more solicitous to observe this,  
“ and to *impress* it upon the minds of  
“ *Christians*, because it is the *only thing*  
“ that can either prevent or cure the *mis-*  
“ *takes* of many sincere *Christians* upon  
“ this subject.” *Plain Account*, p. 5, 6.

*I am*

*my Lord, &c.*

LETTER

## LETTER IX.

*My Lord,*

**T**HERE are sundry passages of scripture commonly thought to countenance infant baptism, which therefore must be considered. *Mark x. 13, &c.* They brought YOUNG CHILDREN to Christ, that he should TOUCH them; and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. AND HE TOOK THEM UP IN HIS ARMS, PUT HIS HANDS UPON THEM, AND BLESSED THEM. This historical fact we have in three of the Evangelists. St. Matthew says, Little children were brought to Christ, that he

*should put his hands on them and pray.* *Mark* and *Luke* say, *they were brought unto Christ that he should touch them.* And what did Christ do unto these children? *He laid his hands on them*, saith St. *Matt.* xix. 15. *He took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them*, saith St. *Mark.*

There is no difficulty, my Lord, in these words. We are expressly told, the children were brought unto our Saviour, for the benefit of *his blessing* and *prayers*; attended with the usual ceremony of *imposition of hands*: for in this manner holy men were used to *bless* or *pray for a blessing* on others. The custom is as ancient as the time of the patriarch *Jacob*; who called for *Joseph*'s two sons *Manasseh* and *Ephraim*, that he might *bless* them, and he put his right hand upon *Ephraim*'s head, and his left hand upon *Manasseh*'s head, and he said, *God bless the lads*, Gen. xlviij.

Here is the very same transactions, as that we haye under consideration : *Jacob* called for his grandchildren, that he might *bless* them, by imposition of hands and prayer. *Christ*, in like manner, called for the children, (whom his disciples would have sent away) that he might *bless* them, by *imposition of hands and prayer*.

Can your Lordship perceive any thing concerning the christian rite of *baptism* given to these children? Or can it be thought the disciples, if they had been used to baptize children, would have rebuked those that brought them for that purpose? Is it said they were brought for that purpose, or that *Christ* baptized them? No such thing; your Lordship will as soon find baptism given by *Jacob* to the lads whom he blessed, and prayed for; as in this history of the New Testament, of *Christ's* blessing and praying for the *children*.

No doubt, the prayers of pious persons may succeed for a blessing upon in-

fants, or others; and if the fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much, how much more the prayer of *Jesus Christ*! Let us follow him in *praying* for our children: but if we will *baptize* them too Christ affords us no example of this in the passage under consideration.

But is not the *baptism of infants* implied in these following words? *Except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*, John iii. 5. According to the original it is, except *any one* be born, &c. [*εαν μη τις*]. If there be any proof here, it lies in the indefinite word [*τις*] *any one*: but this word occurring in passages without number, where infants cannot possibly be intended; no evidence arises merely from the use of it. A few examples will suffice out of this same Evangelist. St. John vii. 17. *If any man*, [*τις, any one*] *will do his will*, &c. ver. 37. *If any man* [*τις, any one*] *thirst, let him come to me*, &c. viii. 1. *If a man* [*τις, any one*] *keep my saying*, &c. xi. 9, 10. *If any man* [*τις, any*

one] walk in the day, he stumbleth not——  
 but if a man [τις, any one] walk in the  
 night, &c. xv. 6. If a man abide not in  
 me [εἰναι με τις, except any one.] But it  
 may be replied, the nature of the sub-  
 jects here plainly guides us to limit the  
 indeterminate words. [any one] to such as  
 are come to years of understanding. In  
 like manner, I say, the whole doctrine of  
 baptism guides us to limit these very same  
 words to persons come to years of under-  
 standing. The mere word [τις] is too ge-  
 neral and indefinite to prove any thing in  
 this matter.

It may be further observed, that as chri-  
 stian baptism was not yet instituted;\* some  
 good expositors understand this passage  
 viz. *born of water and the spirit*, not of  
*baptism*, but of the influences of the *spirit*.

\* Baptism in the name of Christ, was then in pra-  
 ctice, though the commission, which extended its ap-  
 plication to *all nations*, was not yet delivered. J  
 esus, we are told chap. iv. 1. *made and baptized more*  
*disciples than John.* Editor.

rit only: except a man be born of *the* cleansing spirit. So *Grotius* who says, here is the figure *εν δια δύοις*. And *Calvin*, one of the best expositors of his day, observes, “to talk to *Nicodemus* of *baptism* “ would be premature: the design of “ Christ here is to exhort him to *regeneration* and newness of life.”

But if *baptism* be here intended, it is paraphrased with much good sense by Dr. *Clarke*, in the following words. “ I did “ not mean a new birth in a *natural*, but “ in a *moral* sense; that a man must be “ entirely changed from all the corrupt “ *opinions* he has before entertained; and “ from whatever *wicked practices* he has “ formerly been guilty of, and enter “ upon a perfectly new course of life: “ that he must be baptized into the “ profession of the true religion; and “ that, suitably to this obligation, he “ must be thoroughly purified from all “ worldly and carnal lusts, and must “ universally conform himself in mind “ and life to obey all the holy precepts

“ of that religion, under the guidance  
 “ and assistance of the *Divine Spirit*,  
 “ which God will be always ready to  
 “ bestow on those who sincerely desire to  
 “ obey his commandments. This, I say,  
 “ is necessary in order to a man’s attain-  
 “ ing eternal life; and without this, he  
 “ can never enter into the kingdom of  
 “ God.”

This was doctrine very necessary to *Nicodemus*, a man of the Pharisees who were infinitely scrupulous about *externals*, but great strangers to *inward* substantial religion.

There are two other passages produced in proof of infant baptism. 1 Cor. vii. 14. *Else were your children unclean, but now are they HOLY.* Rom. xi. 16. *If the root be HOLY, so are the branches.* I am very willing that children should be as holy as the most benevolent person can wish them. I have no manner of inclination to lay a stain on that *innocent* age; which our blessed Saviour was so remark-

ably inclined to point out to us, as the *emblem* and *sample* of that simplicity and purity necessary to all his disciples. But as here is not a word about their *baptism*, we still, my Lord, remain quite destitute of that *plain* and *full declaration*, which your Lordship requires for the support and warrant of a *positive institution*.

But no argument is received more readily than this: Baptism comes in the room of Circumcision: children were circumcised, and therefore are to be baptised. My Lord, I must beg leave to hold fast the sound words you have taught me. "If this be so, Christ or his apostles have declared it." But where is the passage of scripture, which instructs us that baptism comes in the room of circumcision? The new Testament speaks very copiously of circumcision as a rite *abolished*; the retention whereof, far from being serviceable, would be *mischievous*; therefore it was a happiness to be *free* from it; but no where, that I can find,

does the scripture say, or so much as hint, that baptism comes in its place.

In the apostles days, the christians converted from *Judaism* were exceedingly inclined and zealous to incorporate circumcision with christianity. Their zeal in this matter became very troublesome to the churches. What method do the apostles take to remedy this evil? Do they ever instruct them that they need not be so tenacious of one positive rite, since another was appointed in its stead; to be administred to the same persons of the same age? Such an observation would have been very much to the purpose; and the most likely that could be to give the judaizing christians satisfaction; and therefore, I suppose, the apostles would have taken this method, if the fact were really so, that baptism was substituted in the room of circumcision. But do they go this way to work? Nothing is to be found of it in all their reasonings to dissuade christians from circumcision.

They warn christians that the zealots for circumcision were *subverters* of mens souls, *Act* xv. 24. That circumcision availed *not* unto justification; whether that rite be considered as derived from *Moses* or from *Abraham*, *Rom.* iv. And *that if they were circumcised, Christ should profit them nothing*, *Gal.* v. 2.

This is the way they treat that Old-Testament rite: as a useless, burthen-some, injurious ceremony. But they never go about to soften the *Jews*, by telling them that christianity has another rite *in its stead*. And yet this way of dealing with them is not more soft, than it was likely to have proved effectual; if it were so, that baptism is the substitute of circumcision. Now because the apostles never talk in this strain, it seems natural to infer they never thought so.

I know but of one passage in all the New Testament, that has been offered in support of the opinion, that baptism comes in the place of circumcision, and

that is, Colos. ii. 11, 12. *In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ: buried with him in baptism, &c.*

For the right understanding of this passage, it will be needful to observe; that the *Colossians*, as other churches of the Gentiles, were in danger of being seduced to the observance of circumcision. To guard them against this danger, the apostle here tells them, they had received the *internal* and *spiritual* circumcision, made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh: consequently the literal circumcision was not necessary, and the judaizing christians troubled them with a groundless controversy.

St *Paul* teaches the same doctrine in other places: thus, *Rom.* ii. 28, 29. *For he is not a Jew which is one OUTWARDLY; neither is that circumcision which is OUTWARD in the FLESH; but*

*he is a few whis is one INWARDLY ; and CIRCUMCISION is that of the HEART, in the SPIRIT, not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God.*

This *inward, spiritual circumcision* being alone to be regarded, he calls the *jewish zealots the concision*, and says that we *christians are the circumcision*, which worship God in the spirit, &c.

The apostle, in the place under consideration, doth not call this spiritual circumcision *baptism*; but, being renewed in the spirit of their mind; having repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; in *consequence* of this they were baptized. Thus they had the *outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual grace*. In a word, the circumcision here spoken of cannot mean *baptism*, for it is expressly said to be made *without hands*; which is not true of baptism, any more than of the literal circumcision.

*I am,*

*my Lord, &c.*

LETTER

## LETTER X.

MY LORD,

**B**APTISM is not a deduction of reason, but a plain *fact*, concerning which the acutest philosopher can know nothing more than any man of common sense. What the scripture testifies and declares concerning this fact, that is our rule, obvious to every attentive reader.

As in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the fact is, that Christ gave the cup to the disciples as well as the *bread*; and therefore the *Roman* church *erreth*, in withholding the cup from the people; and as it is an error to give the Lord's Supper to *infants*, because they are incapable of *remembering* Christ and *examining* themselves, both which the scripture requires relative to that ordinance; so in the sacrament of baptism, it should seem, that be-

cause the fact, as it stands in the New Testament, is *immersion*, it is an *error* to throw that aside, and put something else in the room of it; and because the fact as it stands in the New Testament is, that men *believed*, and were baptized in *consequence* and *testimony* of such belief; not vicarious, not another promising for them, the New Testament knows nothing of this, but their own proper personal belief; therefore it is an error to throw aside the administration of baptism to *believers*, and apply and confine it to an age entirely incapable of any rational act.

After the strictest search into the nature and design of this positive institution, it appears to me there is no positive proof that it was designed for children. And if it be allowed there is no positive evidence, it is, I think, allowing there is no proof at all: for nothing of a positive and ritual nature can be proved a duty, or a command of God, merely by our own *reasonings*, and by arguments drawn from supposed *fitness*. If once we admit as *di-*

*vine appointments*, practices grounded on our own notions of *fitness*, *expediency*, *usefulness*, &c. there is no knowing where to stop. At this rate a thousand ceremonies may be introduced into the church, though not one of them can stand the question, *Who hath required this at your hands?* Isai. i. 12.

I am sorry I am brought to a conclusion, in which so many are otherwise minded. And what parts us? It is this. They aim to prove a *positive command* by *inferences*: I think it necessary (in which I am honoured with your Lordship's suffrage) to look out for a plain declaration. By the force of inference, they set aside that maturity of age, and *self-dedication* to true religion, to which all the New Testament history of baptism confines it; and universally, (except in the case of proselytism) apply it to an age incapable of knowing the design of the solemnity, and of which the gospel is perfectly silent.

From examining the instructions of Jesus Christ, and his apostles, it appears

to me, that the two positive institutions of the gospel should go hand in hand, and be received about the same time ; and none baptized, 'till like St. Peter's audience, *they gladly receive the word*, and are qualified for christian *fellowship*, and *breaking of bread*, Acts. ii. 41, 42. But, with most christians, these two ordinances are kept asunder, by the space of a great number of years.

Infants, say the writers for Pædo-baptism, were received into covenant under the Old Testament, by Circumcision ; therefore they must be received into the christian covenant by Baptism : else the Jewish children had a privilege beyond those of Christians.

And may not *infallibility*, that fundamental doctrine of the *Roman* church, be proved in the same manner ? As thus : The people of God under the Old Testament enjoyed the benefit of infallibility. The High Priest had the *Urim* and *Thummim*, by which the mind of God was

known for certainty on great occasions. Consequently, there must be infallibility in the christian church: otherwise the less perfect dispensation of *Moses* will have a great privilege beyond the *christian*. And this infallibility is most evidently of the greatest service, to maintain unity and peace, so necessary to the stability and improvement of the church, and to prevent strife and contention, the root of confusion and every evil work. A privilege so obviously of the greatest use, and which the church had under the Old Testament, undoubtedly remains under the better and more glorious dispensation of Christ.

Thus the *Romanist*, in an affair the *nature* of which admits of none but *positive* evidence, endeavours to make up the want of it by *inference*, and reasoning from *fitness*. Such an institution there was under the Old Testament; therefore it remains under the New.

But, " that our Saviour designed the  
 " bishop of *Rome* to this office [of infal-  
 " libility] and yet would not *say so*, nor  
 " cause it to be written, *so much as once*,  
 " by any of the evangelists and apostles,  
 " but leave it to be drawn out of uncer-  
 " tain principles, by thirteen or fourteen  
 " more uncertain consequences ; he that  
 " can believe it, let him believe it." *Chil-*  
*" ling.* p. 61.

Whether, or how far this is applicable  
 to the doctrine of *infant baptism*, which  
 also our Saviour has not caused to be  
*written* by any of the evangelists and  
 apostles, *so much at once*, your Lordship  
 will judge.

If positive institutions may be proved  
 by mere *inference*, and the supposed *fitness*  
 of *things* ; may we not advance a step or  
 two farther ? Thus, At the *passover*, men,  
 women, and *children* partook, *vide Exod.*  
*xii. 4.* and *Pat. Comment.* Since then  
*children* partook of the *passover*, they have

a right to the Lord's Supper\*. The passover was an ordinance which particularly concerned *children*, commemorating salvation to all *the first-born* of *Israel*, when the first-born of the *Egyptians* were destroyed. But the salvation accomplished by *Jesus Christ* is of infinitely more importance than what the passover commemorated. Christ is the true *paschal lamb*, and expressly stiled *our passover sacrificed for us*. Shall children then be partakers of the *type*, and have no part in the great *antitype*? Were they allowed to partake of an institution which celebrated a bodily and temporal deliverance: and will it not be hard and unreasonable to exclude them from a service which commemorates the eternal salvation of the soul by the Son of GOD? Had children a part in the *memorial of that blood*, which secured them from the destruction in *Egypt*: and must they be outcasts from the *Lord's Supper*,

\* Two eminent writers, Mr. Peirce, and Dr. Priestley, have, on this and other principles, argued for INFANT COMMUNION. Editor.

as if they had no part nor lot in *the blood of Christ*? How absurd were this! to allow them the *shadow*, and debar them the *substance*! to admit them to a *less* privilege, and shut them out from an *infinitely greater*!

Again: may we not reason out a right to positive institution, thus: God promised *Abraham*, to be a *God to him, and to his seed after him*, Gen. xvii. 7. Of this promise and covenant, circumcision was the token, ver. 10, 11. But surely the Almighty did not confine his promise and covenant, to *the male-seed of Abraham*. The distinction of *sex* only, cannot make so vast a difference, that *the sons* of the patriarchs, were within the covenant, and *the daughters* out of it. Besides, this covenant with *Abraham*, was the covenant of *Grace*; that very covenant which contains the spiritual and eternal blessings of the *gospel*. Far be it from any one to think, that the *daughters* of *Abraham*, were excluded such a covenant. Being then

within the covenant, they have a right to an external sign and token of the covenant.

True, it is only said in express words, *Every MAN-CHILD, among you, shall be circumcised.* But certainly, *Abraham* and the *Israelites*, were not such poor reasoners, that they could not infer, by *analogy*, the right of the *female*. *Abraham's daughters* must not be cast out of covenant: but to deny them an external sign would be an exclusion of them, and leaving them to the *uncovenanted mercies of God*.

I am aware, your Lordship will say; this is carrying analogy too far. Analogy will not suffice in support of duties that rest only on *plain declaration*.

But, my Lord, is not this *the very reasoning* for infant baptism, in default of positive command and evidence? and the reasoning on which *the greatest stress is laid*?

“ By *analogy*, saith Dr. *Clarke*, drawn from this rite of *circumcision*, it has

" for very many ages, been the general  
 " practice in the Christian church, to re-  
 " ceive infants by baptism into the obli-  
 " gations of faith and obedience to the  
 " gospel; and to make profession *for*  
 " them, what they are to believe and  
 " obey. [His next words are remark-  
 " able.] Whether this analogy be *rightly*  
 " *drawn*, or no; and be a *sufficient* and  
 " *adequate foundation* *for* what has been  
 " built upon it, is *a controversy*." &c.

*Serm. xxxviii. Vol. I. Edit. Fol.* And a  
 controversy, I think, it will always re-  
 main, while the practice subsisteth, and  
 we are blessed with the liberty of the *Bible*,  
 by which to examine and judge of it.

I shall conclude with offering it to con-  
 sideration, how widely our present ad-  
 ministration of baptism, differs from its first  
 state. It was according to the gospel,  
*immersion*, and continued so, universally,  
 for many ages; but we have at last dis-  
 covered the inconvenience of that, and al-  
 tered it for *another rite*. Its original de-  
 sign was, that the persons baptized should

therein testify for themselves, and as their personal act, their acknowledgment and belief of *Jesus Christ*, to be the Messiah, and Son of God ; and their obligation and purpose of obedience to him. Their baptism, at the very time of receiving it, was a solemn declaration of their being *believers*, and of the obligation, they *knowingly* and of *choice*, took upon themselves, to *walk worthy of the Lord unto all-pleasing*. But now, instead of the person baptized chusing for himself, and promising for himself, he is a mere passive creature ; of an age that knows nothing ; incapable of choice ; but promises, by *proxy*, that he will be, if he lives long enough, a good Christian.

Such is the change made in this sacrament : may I be permitted to ask, is it not a change *entire* and *total*, both as to the *rite* itself, and the *persons* to whom it is administered ? an exclusion of the divine right of *immersion*, and putting *another thing* in its stead ? A preclusion of the *only persons declared in scripture*, viz.

moral agents, persons able to consider and chuse and act for themselves, and confining it to an age, of which, with regard to this sacrament, the New Testament declareth not one single word: herein, I think, is verified the observation of that truly great man Archbishop *Tillotson*, mentioned at the beginning of these letters, *viz.* "In process of time, the "best institutions are apt to *decline*, and "by insensible degrees, to swerve and de- "part from the perfection of their *first state*; and therefore it is a good rule, "to preserve things from corruption and "degeneracy, *often to look back to the first institution*, and by that, to correct those "imperfections and errors, which will "almost unavoidably creep in with time."

*I am, my Lord,  
With great deference and esteem,  
Your Lordship's  
most bumble Servant.*

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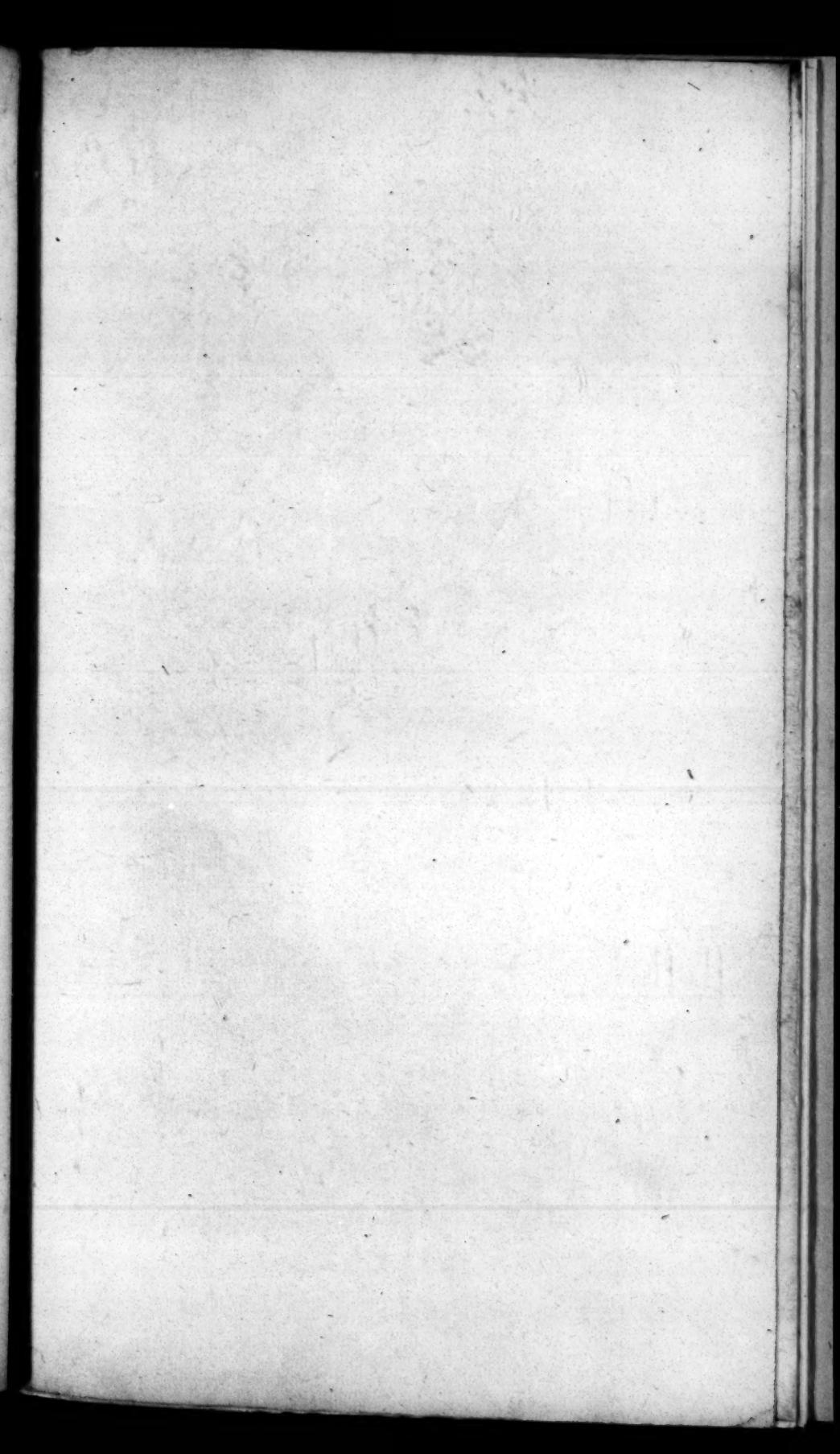
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